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THE WORKS

OF

PROFESSOR WILSON

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

EDITED BY HIS SON-IN-LAW

PROFESSOR FERRIER

VOL. VII.

ESSAYS, CRITICAL AND IMAGINATIVE

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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ESSAYS

CRITICAL AND IMAGINATIVE

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BY

PROFESSOR WILSON

VOL. III.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLVII

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THE

GENIUS AND CHARACTER OF BURNS.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE principal Essay in this volume originally appeared in a work entitled "The Land of Burns, a Series of Landscapes and Portraits illustrative of the Life and Writings of THE SCOTTISH POET, with descriptive letterpress, by Professor Wilson and Robert Chambers, Esq.—Blackie & Sons, Glasgow, 1841." For the convenience of the general reader, the following short chronicle of the more prominent dates in the career of the illustrious Poet has been subjoined.

Robert Burns was born at Alloway, near Ayr, on the 25th of January	1759
His father and family removed to the neighbouring farm of Mount Oliphant	1766
They removed to the farm of Lochlea, parish of Tarbolton, Ayrshire	1777
Burns and his brother Gilbert took the farm of Mossgiel, parish of Mauchline, Ayrshire	1784
The father of Burns died	1784
Burns's first publication	1786
He entertained the intention of emigrating to the West Indies	1786
He visited Edinburgh	1786
The second edition of his Poems	1787
He made a tour of the south of Scotland and the Highlands	1787
He returned to Edinburgh	1787
He obtained an appointment in the Excise	1788
He left Edinburgh—married Jean Armour	1788
He took the farm of Ellisland, Dumfriesshire	1788
He removed with his family to Dumfries	1791
He contributed songs to *Johnson's Museum*	1792
He contributed songs to *Thomson's Scottish Melodies*	1792-96
His health was very much impaired	1795
He died 21st July	1796

ESSAYS

CRITICAL AND IMAGINATIVE.

THE GENIUS AND CHARACTER OF BURNS.

Burns is by far the greatest poet that ever sprung from the bosom of the people, and lived and died in a humble condition. Indeed, no country in the world but Scotland could have produced such a man; and he will be for ever regarded as the glorious representative of the genius of his country. He was born a poet, if ever man was, and to his native genius alone is owing the perpetuity of his fame. For he manifestly had never very deeply studied poetry as an art, nor reasoned much about its principles, nor looked abroad with the wide ken of intellect for objects and subjects on which to pour out his inspiration. The condition of the peasantry of Scotland, the happiest, perhaps, that Providence ever allowed to the children of labour, was not surveyed and speculated on by him as the field of poetry, but as the field of his own existence; and he chronicled the events that passed there, not merely as food for his imagination as a poet, but as food for his heart as a man. Hence, when inspired to compose poetry, poetry came gushing up from the well of his human affections, and he had nothing more to do than to pour it, like streams irrigating a meadow, in many a cheerful tide over the drooping flowers and fading verdure of life. Imbued with vivid perceptions, warm feelings, and strong

passions, he sent his own existence into that of all things, animate and inanimate, around him; and not an occurrence in hamlet, village, or town, affecting in any way the happiness of the human heart, but roused as keen an interest in the soul of Burns, and as genial a sympathy, as if it had immediately concerned himself and his own individual welfare. Most other poets of rural life have looked on it through the aerial veil of imagination—often beautified, no doubt, by such partial concealment, and beaming with a misty softness more delicate than the truth. But Burns would not thus indulge his fancy where he had felt—felt so poignantly, all the agonies and all the transports of life. He looked around him, and when he saw the smoke of the cottage rising up quietly and unbroken to heaven, he knew, for he had seen and blessed it, the quiet joy and unbroken contentment that slept below; and when he saw it driven and dispersed by the winds, he knew also but too well, for too sorely had he felt them, those agitations and disturbances which had shook him till he wept on his chaff bed. In reading his poetry, therefore, we know what unsubstantial dreams are all those of the golden age. But bliss beams upon us with a more subduing brightness through the dim melancholy that shrouds lowly life; and when the peasant Burns rises up in his might as Burns the poet, and is seen to derive all that might from the life which at this hour the peasantry of Scotland are leading, our hearts leap within us, because that such is our country, and such the nobility of her children. There is no delusion, no affectation, no exaggeration, no falsehood in the spirit of Burns's poetry. He rejoices like an untamed enthusiast, and he weeps like a prostrate penitent. In joy and in grief the whole man appears: some of his finest effusions were poured out before he left the fields of his childhood, and when he scarcely hoped for other auditors than his own heart, and the simple dwellers of the hamlet. He wrote not to please or surprise others—we speak of those first effusions—but in his own creative delight; and even after he had discovered his power to kindle the sparks of nature wherever they slumbered, the effect to be produced seldom seems to have been considered by him, assured that his poetry could not fail to produce the same passion in the hearts of other men from which it boiled over in his own. Out of himself, and beyond his own nearest

and dearest concerns, he well could, but he did not much love often or long to go. His imagination wanted not wings broad and strong for highest flights. But he was most at home when walking on this earth, through this world, even along the banks and braes of the streams of Coila. It seems as if his muse were loth to admit almost any thought, feeling, image, drawn from any other region than his native district—the hearth-stone of his father's hut—the still or troubled chamber of his own generous and passionate bosom. Dear to him the jocund laughter of the reapers on the corn-field, the tears and sighs which his own strains had won from the children of nature enjoying the mid-day hour of rest beneath the shadow of the hedgerow tree. With what pathetic personal power, from all the circumstances of his character and condition, do many of his humblest lines affect us! Often, too often, as we hear him singing, we think that we see him suffering! "Most musical, most melancholy," he often is, even in his merriment! In him, alas! the transports of inspiration are but too closely allied with reality's kindred agonies! The strings of his lyre sometimes yield their finest music to the sighs of remorse or repentance. Whatever, therefore, be the faults or defects of the poetry of Burns—and no doubt it has many—it has, beyond all that ever was written, this greatest of all merits, intense, life-pervading, and life-breathing truth.

There is probably not a human being come to the years of understanding in all Scotland, who has not heard of the name of Robert Burns. It is, indeed, a household word. His poems are found lying in almost every cottage in the country, on the "window-sole" of the kitchen, spence, or parlour; and in the town-dwellings of the industrious poor, if books belong to the family at all, you are pretty sure to see there the dear Ayrshire Ploughman. The father or mother, born and long bred, perhaps, among banks and braes, possesses, in that small volume, a talisman that awakens in a moment all the sweet visions of the past, and that can crowd the dim abode of hard-working poverty with a world of dear rural remembrances that awaken not repining but contentment.

No poet ever lived more constantly and more intimately in the hearts of a people. With their mirth, or with their melancholy, how often do his "native wood-notes wild" affect the sitters by the ingles of low-roofed homes, till their hearts

overflow with feelings that place them on a level, as moral creatures, with the most enlightened in the land, and more than reconcile them with, make them proud of, the condition assigned them by Providence! There they see with pride the reflection of the character and condition of their own order. That pride is one of the best natural props of poverty; for, supported by it, the poor envy not the rich. They exult to know and to feel that they have had treasures bequeathed to them by one of themselves—treasures of the heart, the intellect, the fancy, and the imagination, of which the possession and the enjoyment are one and the same, as long as they preserve their integrity and their independence. The poor man, as he speaks of Robert Burns, always holds up his head and regards you with an elated look. A tender thought of the "Cottar's Saturday Night," or a bold thought of "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," may come across him; and he who in such a spirit loves home and country, by whose side may he not walk an equal in the broad eye of day as it shines over our Scottish hills? This is true popularity. Thus interpreted, the word sounds well, and recovers its ancient meaning. The land "made blithe with plough and harrow,"—the broomy or the heathery braes—the holms by the river's side—the forest where the woodman's ringing axe no more disturbs the cushat—the deep dell where all day long sits solitary plaided boy or girl watching the kine or the sheep—the moorland hut without any garden—the lowland cottage, whose garden glows like a very orchard, when crimsoned with fruit-blossoms most beautiful to behold—the sylvan homestead sending its reek aloft over the huge sycamore that blackens on the hill-side—the straw-roofed village gathering with small bright crofts its many white gable-ends round and about the modest manse, and the kirk-spire covered with the pine-tree that shadows its horologe—the small, quiet, half-slated half-thatched rural town,—there resides, and will for ever reside, the immortal genius of Burns. Oh, that he, the prevailing Poet, could have seen this light breaking in upon the darkness that did too long and too deeply overshadow his lot! Some glorious glimpses of it his prophetic soul did see; witness "The Vision," or that somewhat humbler but yet high strain, in which, bethinking him of the undefined aspirations of his boyhood, he said to himself—

"Even then a wish, I mind its power,
A wish that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast,
That I, for puir auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least!

The rough bur-thistle, spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turned the weeder-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear."

Such hopes were with him in his "bright and shining youth," surrounded as it was with toil and trouble that could not bend his brow from its natural upward inclination to the sky; and such hopes, let us doubt it not, were also with him in his dark and faded prime, when life's lamp burned low indeed, and he was willing at last, early as it was, to shut his eyes on this dearly beloved but sorely distracting world.

With what strong and steady enthusiasm is the anniversary of Burns's birthday celebrated, not only all over his own native land, but in every country to which an adventurous spirit has carried her sons! On such occasions, nationality is a virtue. For what else is the "Memory of Burns," but the memory of all that dignifies and adorns the region that gave him birth? Not till that region is shorn of all its beams—its honesty, its independence, its moral worth, its genius, and its piety, will the name of Burns

"Die on her ear, a faint unheeded sound."

But it has an immortal life in the hearts of young and old, whether sitting at gloaming by the ingle-side, or on the stone seat in the open air, as the sun is going down, or walking among the summer mists on the mountain, or the blinding winter snows. In the life of the poor there is an unchanging and a preserving spirit. The great elementary feelings of human nature there disdain fluctuating fashions; there pain and pleasure are alike permanent in their outward shows as in their inward emotions; there the language of passion never grows obsolete; and at the same passage you hear the child sobbing at the knee of her grandame whose old eyes are somewhat dimmer than usual

with a haze that seems almost to be of tears. Therefore, the poetry of Burns will continue to charm, as long as Nith flows, Criffel is green, and the bonny blue of the sky of Scotland meets with that in the eyes of her maidens, as they walk up and down her hills silent or singing to kirk or market.

Let us picture to ourselves the Household in which Burns grew up to manhood, shifting its place without much changing its condition, from first to last always fighting against fortune, experiencing the evil and the good of poverty, and in the sight of men obscure. His father may be said to have been an elderly man when Robert was born, for he was within a few years of forty, and had always led a life of labour; and labour it is that wastes away the stubbornest strength—among the tillers of the earth a stern ally of time. "His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare" at an age when many a forehead hardly shows a wrinkle, and when thick locks cluster darkly round the temples of easy-living men. The sire who "turns o'er wi' patriarchal pride the big Ha-Bible," is indeed well-stricken in years, but he is not an old man, for

> "The expectant *wee things*, toddlin, stacher through
> To meet their dad wi' flichterin noise and glee;
> His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonnily;
> His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
> The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
> Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
> And makes him quite forget his labour and his toil."

That picture, Burns, as all the world knows, drew from his father. He was himself, in imagination, again one of the "wee things" that ran to meet him; and "the priest-like father" had long worn that aspect before the poet's eyes, though he died before he was threescore. "I have always considered William Burnes," says the simple-minded tender-hearted Murdoch, "as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with, and many a worthy character I have known. He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the paths of virtue, not in driving them, as some people do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault very seldom; and, therefore, when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of

reverential awe. I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues, of the venerable William Burnes. I shall only add that he practised every known duty, and avoided everything that was criminal; or, in the apostle's words, 'herein did he exercise himself, in living a life void of offence towards God and towards man.' Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive, from these few particulars, what kind of a person had the principal part in the education of the poet." Burns was as happy in a mother, whom, in countenance, it is said he resembled; and as sons and daughters were born, we think of the "auld clay biggin" more and more alive with cheerfulness and peace.

His childhood, then, was a happy one, secured from all evil influences and open to all good, in the guardianship of religious parental love. Not a boy in Scotland had a better education. For a few months, when in his sixth year, he was at a small school at Alloway Mill, about a mile from the house in which he was born; and for two years after under the tuition of good John Murdoch, a young scholar whom William Burnes and four or five neighbours engaged to supply the place of the schoolmaster, who had been removed to another situation, lodging him, as is still the custom in some country places, by turns in their own houses. "The earliest composition I recollect taking pleasure in, was 'The Vision of Mirza,' and a hymn of Addison's, beginning, 'How are thy servants bless'd, O Lord!' I particularly remember one half-stanza which was music to my boyish ear,

> 'For though on dreadful whirls we hang,
> High on the broken wave.'

I met with these pieces in Mason's English Collection, one of my school-books. The two first books I ever read in print, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were the *Life of Hannibal*, and the *History of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wished myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a tide of Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest." And speaking of the

same period and books to Mrs Dunlop, he says, "For several of my earlier years I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious but unfortunate stories. In these boyish days I remember, in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace's story, where these lines occur—

> 'Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
> To make a silent and a safe retreat.'

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half-a-dozen miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged." Murdoch continued his instructions until the family had been about two years at Mount Oliphant, and there being no school near us, says Gilbert Burns, and our services being already useful on the farm, "my father undertook to teach us arithmetic on the winter nights by candle-light; and in this way my two elder sisters received all the education they ever had." Robert was then in his ninth year, and had owed much, he tells us, to "an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantrips, giants and enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out on suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors."

We said that not a boy in Scotland had a better education than Robert Burns, and we do not doubt that you will agree with us; for in addition to all that may be contained in those sources of useful and entertaining knowledge, he had been taught to read, not only in the Spelling Book, and Fisher's English Grammar, and "The Vision of Mirza," and Addison's Hymns, and *Titus Andronicus* (though on Lavinia's entrance "with her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out," he threatened

to burn the book), but in THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE BIBLE, —and all this in his father's house, or in the houses of the neighbours,—happy as the day was long, or the night, and in the midst of happiness; yet even then, sometimes saddened, no doubt, to see something more than solemnity or awfulness on his father's face, that was always turned kindly towards the children, but seldom wore a smile.

Wordsworth had these memorials in his mind when he was conceiving the boyhood of the Pedlar in his great poem *The Excursion.*

> "But eagerly he read and read again,
> Whate'er the minister's old shelf supplied;
> The life and death of martyrs, who sustained,
> With will inflexible, those fearful pangs
> Triumphantly displayed in records left
> Of persecution, and the Covenant,—times
> Whose echo rings through Scotland to this hour;
> And there, by lucky hap, had been preserved
> A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,
> That left half-told the preternatural tale,
> Romance of giants, chronicle of fiends,
> Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts
> Strange and uncouth; dire faces, figures dire,
> Sharp-knee'd, sharp-elbowed, and lean-ankled too,
> With long and ghastly shanks—forms which once seen
> Could never be forgotten. In his heart
> Where fear sate thus, a cherished visitant,
> Was wanting yet the pure delight of love
> By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,
> Or by the silent looks of happy things,
> Or flowing from the universal face
> Of earth and sky. But he had felt the power
> Of nature, and already was prepared,
> By his intense conceptions, to receive
> Deeply the lesson deep of love, which he
> Whom nature, by whatever means, has taught
> To feel intensely, cannot but receive.
> SUCH WAS THE BOY."

Such was the boy; but his studies had now to be pursued by fits and snatches, and therefore the more eagerly and earnestly, during the intervals or at the close of labour that before his thirteenth year had become constant and severe.

"The cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave!" These are his own memorable words, and they spoke the truth. "For nothing could be more retired," says Gilbert, "than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant; we scarcely saw any but members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age, or near it, in the neighbourhood." They all worked hard from morning to night, and Robert hardest of them all. At fifteen he was the principal labourer on the farm, and relieved his father from holding the plough. Two years before he had assisted in thrashing the crop of corn. The two noble brothers saw with anguish the old man breaking down before their eyes; nevertheless, assuredly, though they knew it not, they were the happiest boys "the evening sun went down upon." "True," as Gilbert tells us, "I doubt not but the hard labour and sorrow of this period of his life was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull headache, which at a future period of his life was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time." Nevertheless, assuredly both boys were happy, and Robert the happier of the two; for if he had not been so, why did he not go to sea? Because he loved his parents too well to be able to leave them, and because, too, it was his duty to stay by them, were he to drop down at midnight in the barn and die with the flail in his hand. But if love and duty cannot make a boy happy, what can? Passion, genius, a teaming brain, a palpitating heart, and a soul of fire. These, too, were his, and idle would have been her tears, had Pity wept for young Robert Burns.

Was he not hungry for knowledge from a child? During these very years he was devouring it; and soon the dawn grew day. "My father," says Gilbert, "was for some time the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us, as if we had been men; and was at great pains, while we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm us in virtuous habits. He borrowed Salmon's *Geographical Grammar* for us, and endea-

voured to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world; while from a book society in Ayr he procured for us the reading of Durham's *Physico and Astro Theology*, and Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*. Robert read all these books with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber to Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*. From this Robert collected a competent knowledge of ancient history; *for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches.*" He kept reading to at the *Spectator*, Pope, and Pope's *Homer*, some plays of Shakespeare, Boyle's *Lectures*, Locke *On the Human Understanding*, Hervey's *Meditations*, Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, the works of Allan Ramsay and Smollett, and A Collection of Songs. "That volume was my *vade-mecum*. I pored over them, during my work, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noticing the true tender or sublime from affectation or fustian; and I am convinced I owe to this practice most of my critic-craft, such as it is."

So much for book-knowledge; but what of the kind that is born within every boy's own bosom, and grows there till often that bosom feels as if it would burst? To Mr Murdoch, Gilbert always appeared to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of a wit than Robert. Yet imagination or wit he had none. His face said, "Mirth, with thee I mean to live;" yet he was through life sedate. Robert himself says that in childhood he was by no means a favourite with anybody—but he must have been mistaken; and "the stubborn sturdy something in his disposition" hindered him from seeing how much he was loved. The tutor tells us he had no ear for music, and could not be taught a psalm tune! Nobody could have supposed that he was ever to be a poet! But nobody knew anything about him—nor did he know much about himself; till Nature, who had long kept, chose to reveal, her own secret.

You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labour of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; she was a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass.* In short, she altogether, unwittingly to herself, initiated me in

that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our sweetest blessing here below. How she caught the contagion I could not tell: you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c., but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heartstrings thrill like an Eolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand, to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sang sweetly; and it was a favourite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sang a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting that he could smear sheep and cast peats, his father living on the moorlands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself. THUS WITH ME BEGAN LOVE AND POETRY.

And during those seven years, when his life was "the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave," think ye not that the boy Poet was happy, merely because he had the blue sky over his head, and the green earth beneath his feet? He who ere long invested the most common of all the wildflowers of the earth with immortal beauty to all eyes, far beyond that of the rarest, till a tear as of pity might fall down manly cheeks on the dew-drop nature gathers on its "snawie bosom, sunward spread!"

"Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r
Thou bonny gem.

"Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonny lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' speckled breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east."

Thus far the life of this wonderful being is blameless—thus far it is a life of virtue. Let each season, with him and with all men, have its due meed of love and of praise—and, therefore, let us all delight to declare how beautiful was the Spring! And was there in all those bright and bold blossoms a fallacious promise? Certainly not of the fruits of genius; for these far surpassed what the most hopeful could have predicted of the full-grown tree. But did the character of the man belie that of the boy? Was it manifested at last, either that the moral being had undergone some fatal change reaching to the core, or that it had been from the first hollow, and that these noble-seeming virtues had been delusions all?

The age of puberty has passed with its burning but blameless loves, and Robert Burns is now a man. Other seven years of the same kind of life as at Mount Oliphant, he enjoys and suffers at Lochlea. It is sad to think that his boyhood should have been so heavily burthened; but we look with no such thoughts on his manhood, for his strength is knit, and the sinews of soul and body are equal to their work. He still lives in his father's house, and he still upholds it; he still reverences his father's eyes that are upon him; and he is still a dutiful son—certainly not a prodigal.

During the whole of the time we lived at Lochlea with my father, he allowed my brother and me such wages for our labour as he gave to other labourers, as a part of which, every article of our clothing manufactured in the family was regularly accounted for. When my father's affairs were near a crisis, Robert and I took the farm of Mossgiel, consisting of 118 acres, at £90 per annum, as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family, and was a joint concern among us. Every member of the family was allowed ordinary wages for the labour he performed on the farm. My brother's allowance and mine was £7 per annum each, and during the whole time this family concern lasted, which was four years, as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, his expenses never in any one year exceeded his slender income. As I was intrusted with the keeping of the family accounts, it is not possible that there can be any fallacy in this statement, in my brother's favour. *His temperance and frugality were everything that could be wished.*

During his residence for six months in Irvine, indeed, where he wrought at the business of a flax-dresser, with the view of

adopting that trade, that he might get settled in life, paid a shilling a-week for his lodging, and fed on meal and water, with some wild boon-companions he occasionally lived rather free. No doubt he sometimes tasted the "Scotch drink," of which he ere long sung the praises; but even then, his inspiration was from "a well-head undefiled." He was as sober a man as his brother Gilbert himself, who says, "I do not recollect, during these seven years, to have ever seen him intoxicated, nor was he at all given to drinking." We have seen what were his virtues—for his vices, where must we look?

During all these seven years, the most dangerous in the life of every one, that of Robert Burns was singularly free from the sin to which nature is prone; nor had he drunk of that guilty cup of the intoxication of the passions, that bewilders the virtue, and changes their wisdom into foolishness, of the discreetest of the children of men. But drink of it at last he did; and like other sinners seemed sometimes even to glory in his shame. But remorse puts on looks, and utters words, that, being interpreted, have far other meanings; there may be recklessness without obduracy; and though the keenest anguish of self-reproach be no proof of penitence, it is a preparation for it in nature—a change of heart can be effected only by religion. How wisely he addresses his friend!

"The sacred lowe o' weel-placed love,
Luxuriously indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Though naething should divulge it.
I waive the quantum of the sin,
The hazard o' concealing;
But oh! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!"

It was before any such petrifaction of feeling had to be deplored by Robert Burns that he loved Mary Campbell, his "Highland Mary," with as pure a passion as ever possessed young poet's heart; nor is there so sweet and sad a passage recorded in the life of any other one of all the sons of song. Many such partings there have been between us poor beings—blind at all times, and often blindest in our bliss—but all gone to oblivion. But that hour can never die—that scene

will live for ever. Immortal the two shadows standing there, holding together the Bible—a little rivulet flowing between—in which, as in consecrated water, they have dipt their hands, water not purer than, at that moment, their united hearts!

There are few of his songs more beautiful, and none more impassioned than

"Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary."

But what are lines like these to his "Address to Mary in Heaven!" It was the anniversary of the day on which he heard of her death—that to him was the day on which she died. He did not keep it as a day of mourning—for he was happy in as good a wife as ever man had, and cheerfully went about the work of his farm. But towards the darkening "he appeared to grow very sad about something," and wandered out of doors into the barn-yard, where his Jean found him lying on some straw with his eyes fixed on a shining star "like another moon."

"Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?"

He wrote them all down just as they now are, in their immortal beauty, and gave them to his wife. Jealousy may be felt even of the dead. But such sorrow as this the more endeared her husband to her heart—a heart ever faithful—and at times when she needed to practise that hardest of all virtues in a wife—forgiving; but here all he desired was her sympathy—and he found it in some natural tears.

William Burnes was now—so writes Robert to one of his

cousins—"in his own opinion, and indeed in almost everybody's else, in a dying condition,"—far gone in a consumption, as it was called; but dying, though not sixty, of old age at last. His lot in this life was in many things a hard one, but his blessings had been great, and his end was peace. All his children had been dutiful to their parents, and to their care he confided their mother. If he knew of Robert's transgressions in one year, he likewise knew of his obedience through many; nor feared that he would strive to the utmost to shelter his mother in the storm. Robert writes, "On the 13th current (Feb. 1784) I lost the best of fathers. Though, to be sure, we have had long warning of the impending stroke, still the feelings of nature claim their part; and I cannot recollect the tender endearments and parental lessons of the best of friends, and the ablest of instructors, without feeling what perhaps the calmer dictates of reason would partly condemn. I hope my father's friends in your country will not let their connection in this place die with him. For my part I shall ever with pleasure, with pride, acknowledge my connection with those who were allied, by the ties of blood and friendship, to a man whose memory I will ever honour and revere." And now the family remove to Mossgiel,

"A virtuous household, but exceeding poor."

How fared Burns during the next two years, as a peasant? How fared he as a poet? As a peasant, poorly and hardly—as a poet, greatly and gloriously. How fared he as a man? *Read his confessions.* Mossgiel was the coldest of all the soils on which the family had slaved and starved—starved is too strong a word—and, in spite of its ingratitude, its fields are hallowed ground. Thousands and tens of thousands have come from afar to look on them; and Wordsworth's self has "gazed himself away" on the pathetic prospect.

"'There,' said a stripling, pointing with much pride,
Towards a low roof, with green trees half-concealed,
'Is Mossgiel farm; and that's the very field
Where Burns plough'd up the Daisy.' Far and wide
A plain below stretched seaward, while, descried
Above sea-clouds, the peaks of Arran rose;
And, by that simple notice, the repose
Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified.

Beneath the random bield of clod or stone,
Myriads of daisies have shone forth in flower
Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour
Have passed away ; less happy than the one
That, by the unwilling ploughshare, died to prove
The tender charm of poetry and love."

Peasant — Poet—Man — is, indeed, an idle distinction. Burns is sitting alone in the Auld Clay-Biggin, for it has its one retired room; and, as he says, "half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit"—all he had made by rhyme! He is the picture of a desponding man, steeped to the lips in poverty of his own bringing on, and with a spirit vainly divided between hard realities, and high hopes beyond his reach, resolving at last to forswear all delusive dreams, and submit to an ignoble lot. When at once, out of the gloom arises a glory, effused into form by his own genius creative according to his soul's desire, and conscious of its greatness despite of despair. A thousand times before now had he been so disquieted and found no comfort. But the hour had come of self-revelation, and he knew that on earth his name was to live for ever.

"'All hail! my own inspired bard!
In me thy native Muse regard!
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low!
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light, aërial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

* * * * *

Of these am I—Coila my name;
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells, chiefs of fame,
Held ruling power:
I mark'd thy embryo tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,
Fired at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the north his fleecy store
Drove through the sky,
I saw grim nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

Or, when the deep green-mantled earth
Warm cherish'd every flow'ret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove,
I saw thee eye the gen'ral mirth
With boundless love.

When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
Call'd forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their evening joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong
Keen-shivering shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adored *Name*,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,
Misled by fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven.

* * * * *

To give my counsels all in one—
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve the dignity of man,
With soul erect;
And trust, the Universal Plan
Will all protect.

And wear thou this'—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:
The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away."

"To reconcile to our imagination the entrance of an aerial being into a mansion of this kind," says the excellent Currie, "required the powers of Burns; he, however, succeeds." Burns cared not at that time for our imagination—not he, indeed, not a straw; nor did he so much as know of our existence. He knew that there was a human race; and he believed that he was born to be a great power among them, especially all over his beloved and beloving Scotland. "All hail! my own inspired bard!" That "all hail!" he dared to hear from supernatural lips, but not till his spirit had long been gazing, and long been listening to one commissioned by the "genius of the land," to stand a Vision before her chosen poet in his hut. Reconcile her entrance to our imagination! Into no other mansion but that "Auld Clay-Biggin" would Coila have descended from the sky.

The critic continues, "To the painting on her mantle, on which is depicted the most striking scenery, as well as the most distinguished characters of his native country, some exception may be made. The mantle of Coila, like the cup of Thyrsis (see the first Idyllium of Theocritus), and the shield of Achilles, is too much crowded with figures, and some of the objects represented upon it are scarcely admissible according to the principles of design."

We advise you not to see the first Idyllium of Theocritus. Perhaps you have no Greek. Mr Chapman's translation is as good as a translation can well be, but then you may not have a copy of it at hand. A pretty wooden cup it is, with curled

ears and ivy-twined lips—embossed thereon the figure of a woman with flowing robes and a Lydian head-dress, to whom two angry men are making love. Hard by, a stout old fisherman on a rock is in the act of throwing his net into the sea: not far from him is a vineyard, where a boy is sitting below a hedge framing a locust trap with stalks of asphodel, and guarding the grapes from a couple of sly foxes. Thyrsis, we are told by Theocritus, bought it from a Calydonian Skipper for a big cheese-cake and a goat. We must not meddle with the shield of Achilles.

Turn we then to the "Vision" of Burns, our Scottish Theocritus, as we have heard him classically called, and judge of Dr Currie's sense in telling us to see the cup of Thyrsis.

> "Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
> Till half her leg was scrimply seen;
> And such a leg! my bonny Jean
> Could only peer it;
> Sae straught, sae taper, tight, and clean,
> Nane else could near it."

You observe Burns knew not yet who stood before him—woman, or angel, or fairy—but the Vision reminded him of her whom best he loved.

> "Green, slender, leaf-clad *holly-boughs*
> Were twisted gracefu' round her brows;
> I took her for *some Scottish Muse*,
> By that same token."

Some Scottish Muse—but which of them he had not leisure to conjecture, so lost was he in admiration of that mystic robe—"that mantle large, of greenish hue." As he continued to gaze on her, his imagination beheld whatever it chose to behold. The region dearest to the Poet's heart is all emblazoned there—and there too its sages and its heroes.

> "Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
> There, mountains to the skies were tost;
> Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,
> With surging foam;
> There, distant shone Art's lofty boast,
> The lordly dome.

Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods ;
There, well-fed Irvine stately thuds :
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods,
On to the shore ;
And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough rear'd her head ;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race,
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.

By stately tow'r or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern ;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race heroic wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dyed steel
In sturdy blows ;
While back recoiling seem'd to reel
Their Southron foes.

His Country's Saviour, mark him well !
Bold Richardton's heroic swell ;
The chief on Sark who glorious fell,
In high command ;
And *he* whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a sceptred Pictish shade
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
I mark'd a martial race, portray'd
In colours strong ;
Bold, soldier-featured, undismay'd
They strode along."

What have become of "the laws of design?" But would good Dr Currie have dried up the sea! How many yards, will anybody tell us, were in that green mantle? And what a pattern! Thomas Campbell knew better what liberty is

allowed by nature to Imagination in her inspired dreams. In his noble Stanzas to the Memory of Burns, he says, in allusion to "The Vision,"

> "Him, in his clay-built cot the Muse
> Entranced, and showed him all the forms
> Of fairy light and wizard gloom,
> That only gifted poet views,—
> The genii of the floods and storms,
> And martial shades from glory's tomb."

The *Fata Morgana* are obedient to the laws of perspective, and of optics in general; but they belong to the material elements of nature; this is a spiritual creation, and Burns is its maker. It is far from perfect, either in design or execution; but perfection is found nowhere here below, except in Shakespeare; and if "The Vision" offend you, we fear your happiness will not be all you could desire it even in the "Tempest" or the "Midsummer's Night's Dream."

How full of fine poetry are one and all of his "Epistles" to his friends Sillar, Lapraik, Simpson, Smith,—worthy men one and all, and among them much mother-wit almost as good as genius, and thought to be genius by Burns, who in the generous enthusiasm of his nature exaggerated the mental gifts of everybody he loved, and conceived their characters to be "accordant to his soul's desire." His "Epistle to Davie" was among the very earliest of his productions, and Gilbert's favourable opinion of it suggested to him the first idea of becoming an author. "It was, I think, in summer 1784, when in the interval of hard labour, he and I were reading in the garden (kail-yard), that he repeated to me the principal parts of this Epistle." It breathes a noble spirit of independence, and of proud contentment dallying with the hardships of its lot, and in the power of manhood regarding the riches that are out of its reach, without a particle of envy, and with a haughty scorn. True, he says, "I hanker and canker to see their cursed pride;" but he immediately bursts out into a strain that gives the lie to his own words:—

> "What though, like commoners of air,
> We wander out we know not where,
> But either house or hal'?

Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound
To see the coming year:
On braes when we please, then,
We'll sit an' sowth a tune;
Syne rhyme till't, we'll time till't,
And sing't when we hae dune.

It's no in titles nor in rank;
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
To purchase peace and rest;
It's no in makin muckle mair;
It's no in books, it's no in lear,
To mak us truly blest;
If happiness hae not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest;
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang;
The heart aye's the part aye
That makes us right or wrang."

Through all these Epistles we hear him exulting in the consciousness of his own genius, and pouring out his anticipations in verses so full of force and fire, that of themselves they privilege him to declare himself a Poet after Scotland's own heart. Not even in "The Vision" does he kindle into brighter transports, when foreseeing his fame, and describing the fields of its glory, than in his Epistle to the schoolmaster of Ochiltree; for all his life he associated with schoolmasters —finding along with knowledge, talent, and integrity, originality and strength of character prevalent in that meritorious and ill-rewarded class of men. What can be finer than this?

"We'll sing auld Coila's plains and fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks and braes, her dens and dells,
Where glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree, as story tells,
Frae Southron billies.

At Wallace' name what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat shod,
Or glorious died!

Oh, sweet are Coila's haughs and woods,
When lintwhites chaunt amang the buds,
And jinkin hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods
Wi' wailfu' cry!

Ev'n winter bleak has charms for me
When winds rave through the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary grey;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day.

O Nature! a' thy shows and forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the simmer kindly warms
Wi' life an' light,
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The Muse, nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
Or sweet to stray, and pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!"

It has been thoughtlessly said that Burns had no very deep love of nature, and that he has shown no very great power as a descriptive poet. The few lines quoted suffice to set aside that assertion; but it is true that his love of nature was always linked with some vehement passion, or some sweet affection for living creatures, and that it was for the sake of the humanity she cherishes in her bosom, that she was dear to him as his own life-blood. His love of nature by being thus restricted was the more intense. Yet there are not wanting passages that show how exquisite was his perception of her

beauties even when unassociated with any definite emotion, and inspiring only that pleasure which we imbibe through the senses into our unthinking souls.

"Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As through the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glittered to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night."

Such pretty passages of pure description are rare, and the charm of this one depends on its sudden sweet intrusion into the very midst of a scene of noisy merriment. But there are many passages in which the descriptive power is put forth under the influence of emotion so gentle that they come within that kind of composition in which it has been thought Burns does not excel. As for example,

"Nae mair the flower on field or meadow springs;
Nae mair the grove with airy concert rings,
Except perhaps the Robin's whistling glee,
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree:
The hoary morns precede the sunny days,
Mild, calm, serene, wide spreads the noon-tide blaze,
While thick the gossamour waves wanton in the rays."

Seldom setting himself to describe visual objects but when he is under strong emotion, he seems to have taken considerable pains when he did, to produce something striking; and though he never fails on such occasions to do so, yet he is sometimes ambitious overmuch, and, though never feeble, becomes bombastic, as in his lines on the Fall of Fyers:

"And viewless echo's ear astonished rends."

In the "Brigs of Ayr" there is one beautiful, and one magnificent passage of this kind.

"All before their sight,
A fairy train appear'd in order bright:
Adown the glittering stream they featly danced;
Bright to the moon their various dresses glanced:

They footed o'er the wat'ry glass so neat,
The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet :
While arts of Minstrelsy among them rung,
And soul-ennobling Bards heroic ditties sung."

He then breaks off in celebration of "M'Lauchlan, thairm-inspiring sage," that is, "a well-known performer of Scottish music on the violin," and returns, at his leisure, to the fairies!

The other passage which we have called magnificent is a description of a spate. But in it, it is true, he personates the Auld Brig, and is inspired by wrath and contempt of the New.

"Conceited gowk! puff'd up wi' windy pride!
This mony a year I've stood the flood and tide;
And though wi' crazy eild I'm sair forfairn,
I'll be a Brig when ye're a shapeless cairn!
As yet ye little ken about the matter,
But twa-three winters will inform you better,
When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains,
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
Or stately Lugar's mossy fountains boil,
Or where the Greenock winds his moorland course,
Or haunted Garpal draws his feeble source,
Aroused by blust'ring winds and spotting thowes,
In mony a torrent down his sna-broo rowes;
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring spate,
Sweeps dams and mills, and brigs, a' to the gate;
And from Glenbuck, down to the Ratton-key,
Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd, tumbling sea;
Then down ye'll hurl, deil nor ye never rise!
And dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies."

Perhaps we have dwelt too long on this point; but the truth is that Burns would have utterly despised most of what is now dignified with the name of poetry, where harmlessly enough

"Pure description takes the place of sense;"

but far worse, where the agonising artist intensifies himself into genuine convulsions at the shrine of nature, or acts the epileptic to extort alms. The world is beginning to lose patience with such idolators, and insists on being allowed to see the sun set with her own eyes, and with her own ears to hear the sea. Why, there is often more poetry in five lines of

Burns than any fifty volumes of the versifiers who have had the audacity to criticise him—as by way of specimen,—

"When biting Boreas, fell and dour,
Sharp shivers through the leafless bow'r;
When Phœbus gies a short-lived glow'r
Far south the lift,
Dim-dark'ning through the flaky show'r
Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,
Poor labour sweet in sleep was lock'd,
While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-chok'd,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or through the mining outlet bock'd,
Down headlong hurl."

"Halloween" is now almost an obsolete word—and the liveliest of all festivals, that used to usher in the winter with one long night of mirthful mockery of superstitious fancies, not unattended with stirrings of imaginative fears in many a simple breast, is gone with many other customs of the good old time, not among town-folks only, but dwellers in rural parishes far withdrawn from the hum of crowds, where all such rites originate and latest fall into desuetude. The present wise generation of youngsters can care little or nothing about a poem which used to drive their grandfathers and grandmothers half-mad with merriment when boys and girls, gathered in a circle round some choice reciter, who, though perhaps endowed with no great memory for grammar, had half of Burns by heart. Many of them, doubtless, are of opinion that it is a silly affair. So must think the more aged march-of-mind men who have outgrown the whims and follies of their ill-educated youth, and become instructors in all manner of wisdom. In practice extinct to elderly people it survives in poetry; and there the body of the harmless superstition, in its very form and pressure, is embalmed. "Halloween" was thought, surely you all know *that*, to be a night "when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings, are all abroad on their baneful midnight errands; particularly those aerial people the fairies are said on that night to hold a grand anniversary." So writes Burns in a note; but in the poem evil spirits are disarmed of all their terrors, and fear is

fun. It might have begun well enough, and nobody would have found fault, with

> "Some merry, friendly, kintra folks,
> Together did convene,
> To burn their nits, and pu' their stocks,
> And haud their Halloween
> Fu' blythe that night;"

but Burns, by a few beautiful introductory lines, brings the festival at once within the world of poetry:—

> "Upon that night, when fairies light,
> On Cassilis Downans dance,
> Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
> On sprightly coursers prance;
> Or for Colean the route is ta'en,
> Beneath the moon's pale beams;
> There, up the Cove, to stay and rove
> Amang the rocks and streams
> To sport that night.
>
> Amang the bonny winding banks,
> Where Doon rins, wimplin, clear,
> Where Bruce ance ruled the martial ranks,
> And shook his Carrick spear."

Then instantly he collects the company—the business of the evening is set agoing—each stanza has its new actor and its new charm—the transitions are as quick as it is in the power of winged words to fly; female characters of all ages and dispositions, from the auld guidwife "wha fuft her pipe wi' sic a lunt," to wee Jenny "wi her little skelpie limmer's face"—Jean, Nell, Merran, Meg, maidens all—and "wanton widow Leezie"—figure each in her own individuality animated into full life, by a few touches. Nor less various the males, from haverel Will to "auld uncle John wha wedlock's joys sin' Mar's year did desire"—Rab and Jock, and "fechtin Jamie Fleck" like all bullies "cooard afore bogles;" the only pause in their fast-following proceedings being caused by garrulous grannie's pious reproof of her oe for daurin to try sic sportin "as eat the apple at the glass"—a reproof proving that her own wrinkled breast holds many queer memories of langsyne Halloweens;—all the carking cares of the workday world are clean forgotten; the hopes, fears, and wishes that most agi-

tate every human breast, and are by the simplest concealed, here exhibit themselves without disguise in the freedom not only permitted but inspired by the passion that rules the night—"the passion," says the poet himself, "of prying into futurity, which makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such should honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it among the more unenlightened of our own."

But how have we been able to refrain from saying a few words about the "Cottar's Saturday Night"? How affecting Gilbert's account of its origin!

"Robert had frequently remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,' used by a decent sober head of a family introducing family worship. To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for the 'Cottar's Saturday Night.' The hint of the plan, and title of the poem, were taken from Fergusson's 'Farmer's Ingle.' When Robert had not some pleasure in view in which I was not thought fit to participate, we used frequently to walk together, when the weather was favourable, on the Sunday afternoons (those precious breathing-times to the labouring part of the community), and enjoyed such Sundays as would make me regret to see their number abridged. It was on one of those walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the author repeat 'The Cottar's Saturday Night.' I do not recollect to have read or heard anything by which I was more *highly electrified.*" No wonder Gilbert was highly electrified; for though he had read or heard many things of his brother Robert's of equal poetical power, not one among them all was so charged with those sacred influences that connect the human heart with heaven. It must have sounded like a very revelation of all the holiness for ever abiding in that familiar observance, but which custom, without impairing its efficacy, must often partially hide from the children of labour, when it is all the time helping to sustain them upon and above this earth. And this from the erring to the steadfast brother! From the troubled to the quiet spirit! out of a heart too often steeped in the waters of bitterness, issuing, as from an unpolluted fountain, the inspiration of pious song! But its effect on innumerable hearts is not now *electrical*—it inspires

peace. It is felt yet, and sadly changed will then be Scotland, if ever it be not felt, by every one who peruses it, to be a communication from brother to brother. It is felt by us, all through from beginning to end, to be BURNS's "Cottar's Saturday Night;" at each succeeding sweet or solemn stanza we more and more love the man—at its close we bless him as a benefactor; and if, as the picture fades, thoughts of sin and of sorrow will arise, and will not be put down, let them, as we hope for mercy, be of our own—not his; let us tremble for ourselves as we hear a voice saying, "Fear God and keep his commandments."

There are few more *perfect* poems. It is the utterance of a heart whose chords were all tuned to gratitude, "making sweet melody" to the Giver, on a night not less sacred in His eye than His own appointed Sabbath.

> "November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;
> The short'ning winter day is near a close;
> The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
> The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose;
> The toil-worn *Cottar* frae his labour goes,
> *This night* his weekly moil is at an end,
> Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
> Hoping the *morn* in ease and rest to spend,
> And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend."

That one single stanza is in itself a picture, one may say a poem, of the poor man's life. It is so imaged on the eye that we absolutely see it; but then not an epithet but shows the condition on which he holds, and the heart with which he endures, and enjoys it. Work he must in the face of November; but God who made the year shortens and lengthens its days for the sake of his living creatures, and has appointed for them all their hour of rest. The "miry beasts" will soon be at supper in their clean-strawed stalls—"the black'ning train o' craws" invisibly hushed on their rocking trees; and he whom God made after his own image, that "toil-worn Cottar," he too may lie down and sleep. There is nothing especial in his lot wherefore he should be pitied, nor are we asked to pity him, as he "collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes:" many of us, who have work to do and do it not, may envy his contentment, and the religion that gladdens his release—"hoping the MORN in ease and rest to spend," only to such as

he, in truth, a Sabbath. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day. Six days shalt thou labour and do all that thou hast to do. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work." O! that man should ever find it in his heart to see in that law a stern obligation—not a merciful boon and a blessed privilege!

In those times family-worship in such dwellings, all over Scotland, was not confined to one week-day. It is to be believed that William Burnes might have been heard by his son Robert duly every night saying, "Let us worship God." "There was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase" every time he heard it; but on "Saturday night" family worship was surrounded, in its solemnity, with a gathering of whatever is most cheerful and unalloyed in the lot of labour; and the poet's genius in a happy hour hearing those words in his heart, collected many nights into one, and made the whole observance, as it were, a religious establishment, it is to be hoped, for ever.

"The fifth and sixth stanzas, and the eighteenth," says Gilbert, "thrilled with peculiar ecstasy through my soul;" and well they might; for, in homeliest words, they tell at once of home's familiar doings and of the highest thoughts that can ascend in supplication to the throne of God. What is the eighteenth stanza, and why did it too "thrill with peculiar ecstasy my soul?" You may be sure that whatever thrilled Gilbert's soul will thrill yours if it be in holy keeping; for he was a good man, and walked all his days fearing God.

"Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside."

Think again of the first stanza of all—for you have forgotten it—of the toil-worn Cottar collecting his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes, and weary o'er the moor bending his course homewards. In spite of his hope of *the morn*, you could hardly help looking on him *then* as if he were disconsolate—

now you are prepared to believe, with the poet, that such brethren are among the best of their country's sons, that

> "From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
> That makes her loved at home, revered abroad;"

and you desire to join in the Invocation that bursts from his pious and patriotic heart,—

> "O *Scotia!* my dear, my native soil!
> For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
> Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
> Be bless'd with health, and peace, and sweet content!
> And oh may Heaven their simple lives prevent
> From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
> Then, howe'er *crowns* and *coronets* be rent,
> A *virtuous populace* may rise the while,
> And stand a wall of fire around their much lov'd *Isle.*
>
> O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide
> That stream'd through Wallace's undaunted heart;
> Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
> Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
> (The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,
> His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
> O never, never, Scotia's realm desert:
> But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
> In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!"

We said there are few more perfect poems. The expression is hardly a correct one; but in two of the stanzas there are lines which we never read without wishing them away, and there is one stanza we could sometimes almost wish away altogether; the sentiment, though beautifully worded, being somewhat harsh, and such as must be felt to be unjust by many devout and pious people:—

> "They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
> They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
> Perhaps Dundee's wild warbling measures rise,
> Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name:
> Or noble Elgin beets the heavenward flame,
> The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
> *Compared with these Italian trills are tame;*
> *The tickled ears no heart-felt raptures raise;*
> *Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.*"

We do not find fault with Burns for having written these lines; for association of feeling with feeling, by contrast, is perhaps most of all powerful in music. Believing that there was no devotional spirit in Italian music, it was natural for him to denounce its employment in religious services; but we all know that it cannot without most ignorant violation of the truth be said of the hymns of that most musical of all people, and superstitious as they may be, among the most devout, that

> "Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise."

Our objection to some lines in another stanza is more serious, for it applies not to a feeling but a judgment. That there is more virtue in a cottage than in a palace we are not disposed to deny at any time, least of all when reading "The Cottar's Saturday Night;" and we entirely go along with Burns when he says,

> "And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
> The cottage leaves the palace far behind;"

but there, we think, he ought to have stopped, or illustrated the truth in a milder manner than

> "What is a lordling's pomp?—a cumbrous load,
> Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
> Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined."

Our moral nature revolts with a sense of injustice from the comparison of the wickedness of one class with the goodness of another; and the effect is the very opposite of that intended, the rising up of a miserable conviction that for a while had been laid asleep, that vice and crime are not excluded from cots, but often, alas! are found there in their darkest colours and most portentous forms.

The whole stanza we had in our mind as somehow or other not entirely delightful, is

> "Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
> In all the pomp of method, and of art,
> When men display to congregations wide,
> Devotion's every grace except the heart.
> The Pow'r incensed, the pageant will desert,
> The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
> But haply, in some cottage far apart,
> May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul;
> And in his book of life the inmates poor enrol."

"Let us join in the worship of God" is a strong desire of nature, and a commanded duty; and thus are brought together, for praise and prayer, "congregations wide," in all populous places of every Christian land. Superstition is sustained by the same sympathy as religion—enlightenment of reason being essential to faith. There sit, every Sabbath, hundreds of hypocrites, thousands of the sincere, tens of thousands of the indifferent—how many of the devout or how few who shall say that understands the meaning of *devotion?* If *all* be false and hollow, a mere semblance only, then indeed

> "The Pow'r, incensed, the pageant will desert,
> The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;"

but if, even in the midst of "religion's pride," there be humble and contrite hearts—if a place be found for the poor in spirit even "in gay religions full of pomp and gold"—a Christian poet ought to guard his heart against scorn of the ritual of any form of Christian worship. Be it performed in Cathedral, Kirk, or Cottage—God regards it only when performed in spirit and in truth.

Remember all this poetry, and a hundred almost as fine things besides, was composed within little more than two years, by a man all the while working for wages—seven pounds from May-day to May-day; and that he never idled at his work, but mowed and ploughed as if working by the piece, and could afford therefore, God bless his heart, to stay the share for a minute, but too late for the "wee, sleekit, cowrin, timorous beastie's" nest. Folks have said he was a bad farmer, and neglected Mossgiel, an idler in the land.

> "How various his employments whom the world
> Calls idle!"

Absent in the body, we doubt not, he frequently was from his fields; oftenest in the evenings and at night. Was he in Nance Tinnock's? She knew him by name and head-mark, for once seen he was not to be forgotten; but she complained that he had never drunk three half-mutchkins in her house, whatever he might say in his lying poems. In Poussie Nannie's—mother of Racer Jess?—He was there *once;* and out of the scum and refuse of the outcasts of the lowest grade of possible being, he constructed a Beggar's Opera, in which the singers and dancers, drabs and drunkards all, belong still

to humanity; and though huddling together in the filth of the flesh, must not be classed, in their enjoyments, with the beasts that perish. In the Smiddy? Ay, you might have found him there, at times when he had no horse to be shoed, no coulter to be sharpened.

"When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
And ploughmen gather wi' their graith,
O rare! to see thee fizz and freath
I' the luggit caup!
Then *Burnewin* comes on like death
At every chaup.

Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel;
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel',
Brings hard owrehip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block and studdie ring and reel
Wi' dinsome clamour."

On frozen Muir-loch? Among the curlers "at their *roaring* play"—roaring is the right word—but 'tis not the bonspiel only that roars, it is the ice, and echo tells it is from her crags that submit not to the snow. There king of his rink was Rabbie Burns to be found; and at night in the Hostelry, in the reek of beef and greens and "Scotch drink," Apollo in the shape of a ploughman at the head of the fir-table that dances with all its glasses to the horny fists clenching with cordial thumpers the sallies of wit and humour volleying from his lips and eyes, unreproved by the hale old minister who is happy to meet his parishioners out of the pulpit, and by his presence keeps the poet within bounds, if not of absolute decorum, of that decency becoming men in their most jovial mirth, and not to be violated without reproach by genius in its most wanton mood dallying even with forbidden things. Or at a Rockin? An evening meeting as you know, "*one* of the objects of which," so says the glossary, "is spinning with the rock or distaff;" but which has many other objects, as the dullest may conjecture, when lads and lasses have come flocking from "behind the hills where Stinchar flows, 'mang muirs and mosses mony o'," to one solitary homestead made roomy enough for them all; and if now and then felt to be too close and crowded for the elderly people and the old, not

unprovided with secret spots near at hand in the broom and the brackens, where the sleeping lintwhites sit undisturbed by lovers' whispers, and lovers may look, if they choose it, unashamed to the stars.

And what was he going to do with all this poetry—poetry accumulating fast as his hand, released at night from other implements, could put it on paper in bold round upright characters, that tell of fingers more familiar with the plough than the pen? He himself sometimes must have wondered to find every receptacle in the spence crammed with manuscripts, to say nothing of the many others floating about all over the country, and setting the smiddies in a roar, and not a few, of which nothing was said, folded in the breast-kerchiefs of maidens, put therein by his own hand on the lea-rig, beneath the milk-white thorn. What brought him out into the face of day as a Poet?

Of all the women Burns ever loved, Mary Campbell not excepted, the dearest to him by far, from first to last, was Jean Armour. During composition her image rises up from his heart before his eyes the instant he touches on any thought or feeling with which she could be in any way connected; and sometimes his allusions to her might even seem out of place, did they not please us, by letting us know that he could not altogether forget her, whatever the subject his muse had chosen. Others may have inspired more poetical strains, but there is an earnestness in his fervours, at her name, that brings her breathing in warm flesh and blood to his breast. Highland Mary he would have made his wife, and perhaps broken her heart. He loved her living, as a creature in a dream, dead as a spirit in heaven. But Jean Armour possessed his heart in the stormiest season of his passions, and she possessed it in the lull that preceded their dissolution. She was well worthy of his affection, on account of her excellent qualities; and though never beautiful, had many personal attractions. But Burns felt himself bound to her by that inscrutable mystery in the soul of every man, by which one other being, and one only, is believed, and truly, to be essential to his happiness here,—without whom, life is not life. Her strict and stern father, enraged out of all religion both natural and revealed, with his daughter for having sinned with a man of sin, tore from her hands her

marriage lines as she besought forgiveness on her knees, and, without pity for the life stirring within her, terrified her into the surrender and renunciation of the title of wife, branding her thereby with an abhorred name. A father's power is sometimes very terrible, and it was so here; for she submitted, with less outward show of agony than can be well understood, and Burns almost became a madman. His worldly circumstances were wholly desperate, for bad seasons had stricken dead the cold soil of Mossgiel; but he was willing to work for his wife in ditches, or to support her for a while at home, by his wages as a negro-driver in the West Indies.

A more unintelligible passage than this never occurred in the life of any other man, certainly never a more trying one; and Burns must at this time have been tormented by as many violent passions, in instant succession or altogether, as the human heart could hold. In verse he had for years given vent to all his moods; and his brother tells us that the LAMENT was composed "after the first distraction of his feelings had a little subsided." Had he lost her by death he would have been dumb, but his grief was not mortal, and it grew eloquent, when relieved and sustained from prostration by other passions that lift up the head, if it be only to let it sink down again, rage, pride, indignation, jealousy, and scorn. "Never man loved, or rather adored woman, more than I did her; and to confess a truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all. My poor dear unfortunate Jean! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy; but for her sake I feel most severely; I grieve she is in the road to, I fear, eternal ruin. May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her; and may his grace be with her, and bless her in all her future life! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her; I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riot, mason-meetings, drinking matches, and other mischiefs, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for the grand cure; the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica; and then farewell, dear old Scotland! and farewell, dear ungrateful Jean! for never, never will I see you more." In the LAMENT, there are the same passions, but genius has ennobled them by the tenderness and

elevation of the finest poetry, guided their transitions by her solemnising power, inspired their appeals to conscious night and nature, and subdued down to the beautiful and pathetic, the expression of what had else been agony and despair.

Twenty pounds would enable him to leave Scotland, and take him to Jamaica; and to raise them, it occurred to Robert Burns to publish his poems by subscription! "I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I got subscriptions for about three hundred and sixty. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; and besides, I pocketed, all expenses deducted, near twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenturing myself for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the torrid zone, I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail for the Clyde, 'For hungry ruin had me in the wind.'" The ship sailed; but Burns was still at Mossgiel, for his strong heart could not tear itself away from Scotland, and some of his friends encouraged him to hope that he might be made a gauger! —In a few months, he was about to be hailed by the universal acclamation of his country a great National Poet.

But the enjoyment of his fame all round his birth-place, "the heart and the main region of his song," intense as we know it was, though it assuaged, could not still the troubles of his heart; his life, amidst it all, was as hopeless as when it was obscure; "his chest was on its road to Greenock, where he was to embark in a few days for America," and again he sung

> "Farewell old Coila's hills and dales,
> Her heathy moors and winding vales,
> The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
> Pursuing past unhappy loves!
> Farewell my friends! farewell my foes!
> My peace with these, my love with those—
> The bursting tears my heart declare—
> Farewell the bonny banks of Ayr;"

when a few words from a blind old man to a country clergy-

man kindled within him a new hope, and set his heart on fire; and while

"November winds blew loud wi' angry sugh,"

"I posted away to Edinburgh without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence on my zenith, for once made a revolution to the Nadir."

At first, Burns was stared at with such eyes as people open wide who behold a prodigy; for though he looked the rustic, and his broad shoulders had the stoop that stalwart men acquire at the plough, his swarthy face was ever and anon illumined with the look that genius alone puts off and on, and that comes and goes with a new interpretation of imagination's winged words. For a week or two he had lived chiefly with some Ayrshire acquaintances, and was not personally known to any of the leading men. But as soon as he came forward, and was seen and heard, his name went through the city, and people asked one another, "Have you met Burns?" His demeanour among the Magnates was not only unembarrassed but dignified, and it was at once discerned by the blindest that he belonged to the aristocracy of nature. "The idea which his conversation conveyed of the power of his mind, exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know I have been struck, in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents, and the occasional aspirations of their more favoured moments. But all the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilections for poetry were rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition." Who those poets were, of occasional inspiration and low general talents, and in conversation felt to be of the race of the feeble, Dugald Stewart had too much delicacy to tell us; but if Edinburgh had been their haunt, and theirs the model of the poetical character in the judgment of her sages, no wonder that a new light was thrown on the Philosophy of the Human Mind by that of Robert Burns. For his intellectual faculties were of the highest order, and though deferential to superior knowledge, he spoke on all subjects he understood, and they were many, with a voice of determination, and when need was,

of command. It was not in the debating club in Tarbolton alone, about which so much nonsense has been prosed, that he had learned eloquence; he had been long giving chosen and deliberate utterance to all his bright ideas and strong emotions; they were all his own, or he had made them his own by transfusion; and so, therefore, was his speech. Its fount was in genius, and therefore could not run dry—a flowing spring that needed neither to be *fanged* nor pumped. As he had the power of eloquence, so had he the will, the desire, the ambition to put it forth; for he rejoiced to carry with him the sympathies of his kind, and in his highest moods he was not satisfied with their admiration without their love. There never beat a heart more alive to kindness. To the wise and good how eloquent his gratitude! to Glencairn, how imperishable! This exceeding tenderness of heart often gave such pathos to his ordinary talk, that he even melted commonplace people into tears! Without scholarship, without science, with not much of what is called information, he charmed the first men in a society equal in all these to any at that time in Europe. The scholar was happy to forget his classic lore, as he listened, for the first time, to the noblest sentiments flowing from the lips of a rustic, sometimes in his own Doric divested of all offensive vulgarity, but oftener in language which, in our northern capital, was thought pure English, and comparatively it was so, for in those days the speech of many of the most distinguished persons would have been unintelligible out of Scotland, and they were proud of excelling in the use of their mother tongue. The philosopher wondered that the peasant should comprehend intuitively truths that had been established, it was so thought, by reasoning demonstrative or inductive; as the illustrious Stewart, a year or two afterwards wondered how clear an idea Burns the Poet had of Alison's True Theory of Taste. True it is that the great law of association has by no one been so beautifully stated in a single sentence as by Burns: "That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime than the twingle-twangle of a Jew's harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twig, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stalk of the burdock; and that

from something innate and independent of all associations of ideas—these I had set down as irrefragable orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith." The man of wit —ay, even Harry Erskine himself—and a wittier than he never charmed social life—was nothing loth, with his delightful amenity, to cease for a while the endless series of anecdotes so admirably illustrative of the peculiarities of nations, orders, or individuals, and almost all of them created or vivified by his own genius, that the most accomplished companies might experience a new pleasure from the rich and racy humour of a natural converser fresh from the plough.

And how did Burns bear all this, and much besides even more trying? For you know that a duchess declared that she had never before in all her life met with a man who so fairly carried her off her feet. Hear Professor Stewart: "The attentions he received during his stay in town, from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance." In many passages of his letters to friends who had their fears, Burns expressed entire confidence in his own self-respect, and in terms the most true and touching; as, for example, to Dr Moore: "The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greater part of those who even were authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood." And to his venerated friend Mrs Dunlop he gives utterance, in the midst of his triumphs, to dark forebodings, some of which were but too soon fulfilled! "You are afraid that I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet. Alas! Madam, I know myself and the world too well. I assure you, Madam, I do not dissemble, when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at

this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice, which has borne me to a height where I am feeling absolutely certain my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time, when the same tide will leave me, and recede, perhaps, as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all, to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. But

'When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes,'

you will bear me witness, that, when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood, unintoxicated with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time when the blow of Calumny should dash it to the ground with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph."

Such equanimity is magnanimous; for though it is easy to declaim on the vanity of fame, and the weakness of them who are intoxicated with its bubbles, the noblest have still longed for it, and what a fatal change it has indeed often wrought on the simplicity and sincerity of the most gifted spirits! There must be a moral grandeur in his character who receives sedately the unexpected, though deserved ratification of his title to that genius whose empire is the inner being of his race, from the voice of his native land uttered aloud through all her regions, and harmoniously combined of innumerable tones all expressive of a great people's pride. Make what deductions you will from the worth of that "All hail!" and still it must have sounded in Burns's ears as a realisation of that voice heard by his prophetic soul in "The Vision."

"All hail! my own inspired bard!
I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends!"

Robert Burns was not the man to have degraded himself everlastingly, by one moment's seeming slight or neglect of

friends, new or old, belonging either to his own condition, or to a rank in life somewhat higher perhaps than his own, although not exactly to that "select society" to which the wonder awakened by his genius had given him a sudden introduction. Persons in that middle or inferior rank were his natural, his best, and his truest friends; and many of them, there can be no doubt, were worthy of his happiest companionship either in the festal hour or the hour of closer communion. He had no right, with all his genius, to stand aloof from them, and with a heart like his he had no inclination. Why should he have lived exclusively with lords and ladies—paper or landlords—ladies by descent or courtesy—with aristocratic advocates, philosophical professors, clergymen, wild or moderate, Arminian or Calvinistic? Some of them were among the first men of their age; others were doubtless not inerudite, and a few not unwitty in their own esteem; and Burns greatly enjoyed their society, in which he met with an admiration that must have been to him the pleasure of a perpetual triumph. But more of them were dull and pompous; incapable of rightly estimating or feeling the power of his genius; and when the glitter and the gloss of novelty was worn off before their shallow eyes, from the poet who bore them all down into insignificance, then no doubt they began to get offended and shocked with his rusticity or rudeness, and sought refuge in the distinctions of rank, and the laws, not to be violated with impunity, of "select society." The patronage he received was honourable, and he felt it to be so; but it was still patronage; and had he, for the sake of it or its givers, forgotten for a day the humblest, lowest, meanest of his friends, or even his acquaintances, how could he have borne to read his own two bold lines—

> "The rank is but the guinea stamp,
> The man's the gowd for a' that"?

Besides, we know from Burns's poetry what was then the character of the people of Scotland, for they were its materials, its staple. Her peasantry were a noble race, and their virtues moralised his song. The inhabitants of the towns were of the same family—the same blood—one kindred—and many, most of them, had been born, or in some measure bred, in the country. Their ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, were

much alike; and the shopkeepers of Edinburgh and Glasgow were as proud of Robert Burns, as the ploughmen and shepherds of Kyle and the Stewartry. He saw in them friends and brothers. Their admiration of him was, perhaps, fully more sincere and heartfelt, nor accompanied with less understanding of his merits, than that of persons in higher places; and most assuredly among the respectable citizens of Edinburgh Burns found more lasting friends than he ever did among her gentry and noblesse. Nor can we doubt that then, as now, there were in that order great numbers of men of well cultivated minds, whom Burns, in his best hours, did right to honour, and who were perfectly entitled to seek his society, and to open their hospitable doors to the brilliant stranger. That Burns, whose sympathies were keen and wide, and who never dreamt of looking down on others as beneath him, merely because he was conscious of his own vast superiority to the common run of men, should have shunned or been shy of such society, would have been something altogether unnatural and incredible; nor is it at all wonderful or blamable that he should occasionally even have much preferred such society to that which has been called "more select," and therefore above his natural and proper condition. Admirably as he in general behaved in the higher circles, in those humbler ones alone could he have felt himself completely at home. His demeanour among the rich, the great, the learned, or the wise, must often have been subject to some little restraint, and all restraint of that sort is ever painful; or, what is worse still, his talk must sometimes have partaken of display. With companions and friends, who claimed no superiority in anything, the sensitive mind of Burns must have been at its best and happiest, because completely at its ease, and free movement given to the play of all its feelings and faculties; and in such companies we cannot but believe that his wonderful conversational powers shone forth in their most various splendour. He must have given vent there to a thousand familiar fancies, in all their freedom and all their force, which, in the fastidious society of high life, his imagination must have been too much fettered even to conceive; and which, had they flowed from his lips, would either not have been understood, or would have given offence to that delicacy of breeding which is often hurt even by the best manners of

those whose manners are all of nature's teaching, and unsubjected to the salutary restraints of artificial life. Indeed, we know that Burns sometimes burst suddenly and alarmingly the restraints of "select society;" and that on one occasion he called a clergyman an idiot for misquoting Gray's Elegy—a truth that ought not to have been promulgated in presence of the parson, especially at so early a meal as breakfast: and he confesses in his most confidential letters, though indeed he was then writing with some bitterness, that he never had been truly and entirely happy at rich men's feasts. If so, then never could he have displayed there his genius in full power and lustre. His noble rage must in some measure have been repressed—the genial current of his soul in some degree frozen. He never was, never could be, the free, fearless, irresistible Robert Burns that nature made him—no, not even although he carried the Duchess of Gordon off her feet, and silenced two Ex-Moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Burns, before his visit to Edinburgh, had at all times and places been in the habit of associating with the best men of his order—the best in everything, in station, in manners, in moral and intellectual character; such men as William Tell and Hofer, for example, associated with in Switzerland and the Tyrol. Even the persons he got unfortunately too well acquainted with (but whose company he soon shook off), at Irvine and Kirkoswald — smugglers and their adherents, were, though a lawless and dangerous set, men of spunk, and spirit, and power, both of mind and body; nor was there anything the least degrading in an ardent, impassioned, and imaginative youth becoming for a time rather too much attached to such daring and adventurous, and even interesting characters. They had all a fine strong poetical smell of the sea, mingled to precisely the proper pitch with that of the contraband. As a poet Burns must have been much the better of such temporary associates; as a man, let us hope, notwithstanding Gilbert's fears, not greatly the worse. The passions that boiled in his blood would have overflowed his life, often to disturb, and finally to help to destroy him, had there never been an Irvine and its seaport. But Burns's friends, up to the time he visited Edinburgh, had been chiefly his admirable brother, a few of the ministers round about,

farmers, ploughmen, farm-servants, and workers in the winds of heaven blowing over moors and mosses, cornfields, and meadows, beautiful as the blue skies themselves; and if you call that low company, you had better fling your copy of Burns's "Cottar's Saturday Night," "Mary in Heaven," and all, into the fire. He, the noblest peasant that ever trod the greensward of Scotland, kept the society of other peasants, whose nature was like his own; and then, were the silken-snooded maidens whom he wooed on lea-rig and 'mang the rigs o' barley, were they who inspired at once his love and his genius, his passion and his poetry, till the whole land of Coila overflowed with his immortal song—so that now to the proud native's ear every stream murmurs a music not its own, given it by sweet Robin's lays, and the lark more lyrical than ever seems singing his songs at the gates of heaven for the shepherd's sake as through his half-closed hand he eyes the musical mote in the sunshine, and remembers him who "sung her new-wakened by the daisy's side,"—were they, the blooming daughters of Scotia, we demand of you on peril of your life, low company and unworthy of Robert Burns?

As to the charge of liking to be what is vulgarly called "cock of the company," what does that mean when brought against such a man? In what company, pray, could not Burns, had he chosen it, and he often did choose it, have easily been the first? No need had he to crow among dung-hills. If you liken him to a bird at all, let it be the eagle, or the nightingale, or the bird of Paradise. James Montgomery has done this in some exquisite verses, which are clear in our heart, but indistinct in our memory, and therefore we cannot adorn our pages with their beauty. The truth is, that Burns, though, when his heart burned within him, one of the most eloquent of men that ever set the table in a roar or a hush, was always a modest, often a silent man, and he would sit for hours together, even in company, with his broad forehead on his hand, and his large lamping eyes sobered and tamed, in profound and melancholy thought. Then his soul would "spring upwards like a pyramid of fire," and send "illumination into dark deep holds," or brighten the brightest hour in which Feeling and Fancy ever flung their united radiance over the common ongoings of this our commonplace world and everyday life. Was this the man to desire, with low long-

ings and base aspirations, to shine among the obscure, or rear his haughty front and giant stature among pigmies? He who

> "walked in glory and in joy,
> Following his plough upon the mountain-side;"

he who sat in glory and in joy at the festal board, when mirth and wine did most abound, and strangers were strangers no more within the fascination of his genius, for

> "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin;"

or at the frugal board, surrounded by his wife and children, and servants, lord and master of his own happy and industrious home—the frugal meal, preceded and followed by thanksgiving to the Power that spread his table in the barren places?

Show us any series of works in prose or verse, in which man's being is so illustrated as to lay it bare and open for the benefit of man, and the chief pictures they contain drawn from "select society." There are none such; and for this reason, that in such society there is neither power to paint them, nor materials to be painted, nor colours to lay on, till the canvass shall speak a language which all the world as it runs may read. What would Scott have been, had he not loved and known the people? What would his works have been, had they not shown the many-coloured character of the people? What would Shakespeare have been, had he not often turned majestically from kings, and "lords and dukes and mighty earls," to their subjects and vassals and lowly bondsmen, and "counted the beatings of lonely hearts" in the obscure but impassioned life that stirs every nook of this earth where human beings abide? What would Wordsworth have been, had he disdained, with his high intellect and imagination, "to stoop his anointed head" beneath the wooden lintel of the poor man's door? His Lyrical Ballads, "with all the innocent brightness of the new-born day," had never charmed the meditative heart. His "Churchyard among the Mountains" had never taught men how to live and how to die. These are men who have descended from aerial heights into the humblest dwellings; who have shown the angel's wing equally when poised near the earth, and floating over its cottaged vales, as when seen sailing on high through the clouds

and azure depth of heaven, or hanging over the towers and temples of great cities. They shunned not to parley with the blind beggar by the wayside; they knew how to transmute, by divinest alchemy, the base metal into the fine gold. Whatever company of human beings they have mingled with, they lent it colours, and did not receive its shade; and hence their mastery over the "wide soul of the world, dreaming of things to come." Burns was born, bred, lived, and died in that condition of this mortal life to which they paid but visits; his heart lay wholly there; and that heart, filled as it was with all the best human feelings, and sometimes with thoughts divine, had no fears about entering into places which timid moralists might have thought forbidden and unhallowed ground, but which he, wiser far, knew to be inhabited by creatures of conscience, bound there often in thick darkness by the inscrutable decrees of God.

For a year and more after the publication of the Edinburgh Edition, Burns led a somewhat roving life, till his final settlement with Creech. He had a right to enjoy himself; and it does not appear that there was much to blame in his conduct either in town or country, though he did not live upon air nor yet upon water. There was much dissipation in those days—much hard drinking—in select as well as in general society, in the best as well as in the worst; and he had his share of it in many circles—but never in the lowest. His associates were all honourable men, then, and in after life; and he left the Capital in possession of the respect of its most illustrious citizens. Of his various tours and excursions there is little to be said; the birthplaces of old Scottish Song he visited in the spirit of a religious pilgrim; and his poetical fervour was kindled by the grandeur of the Highlands. He had said to Mrs Dunlop, "I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which, heaven knows! I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles, to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers, and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes. But these are all Utopian thoughts; I have dallied long enough with life; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for, and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers

by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable, nay, shining abilities and some of the nobler virtues may half sanctify a heedless character: but where God and nature have intrusted the welfare of others to his care, where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connections will not rouse to exertion."

Burns has now got liberated, for ever, from "stately Edinborough throned on crags," the favoured abode of philosophy and fashion, law and literature, reason and refinement, and has returned again into his own natural condition, neither essentially the better nor the worse of his city life; the same man he was when "the poetic genius of his country found him at the plough and threw her inspiring mantle over him." And what was he now to do with himself? Into what occupation for the rest of his days was he to settle down? It would puzzle the most sagacious even now, fifty years after the event, to say what he ought to have done that he did not do at that juncture, on which for weal or woe the future must have been so deeply felt by him to depend. And perhaps it might not have occurred to every one of the many prudent persons who have lamented over his follies, had he stood in Burns's shoes, to make over, unconditionally, to his brother one-half of all he was worth. Gilbert was resolved still to struggle on with Mossgiel, and Robert said, "there is my purse." The brothers, different as they were in the constitution of their souls, had one and the same heart. They loved one another—man and boy alike; and the survivor cleared, with pious hands, the weeds from his brother's grave. There was a blessing in that two hundred pounds—and thirty years afterwards Gilbert repaid it with interest to Robert's widow and children, by an Edition in which he wiped away stains from the reputation of his benefactor, which had been suffered to remain too long, and some of which, the most difficult, too, to be effaced, had been even let fall from the fingers of a benevolent biographer who thought himself in duty bound to speak what he most mistakenly believed to be the truth. "Oh Robert!" was all his mother could say on his return to Mossgiel from Edinburgh. In her simple heart she was astonished at his fame, and could not understand it well, any more than she could her own happiness and her own pride.

But his affection she understood better than he did, and far better still his generosity; and duly night and morning she asked a blessing on his head from Him who had given her such a son.

"Between the men of rustic life," said Burns—so at least it is reported—"and the polite world I observed little difference. In the former, though unpolished by fashion, and unenlightened by science, I have found much observation and much intelligence. But a refined and accomplished woman was a thing altogether new to me, and of which I had formed but a very inadequate idea." One of his biographers seems to have believed that his love for Jean Armour, the daughter of a Mauchline mason, must have died away under these more adequate ideas of the sex along with their corresponding emotions; and that he now married her with reluctance. Only think of Burns taking an Edinburgh Belle to wife! He flew, somewhat too fervently,

"To love's willing fetters, the arms of his Jean."

Her father had again to curse her for her infatuated love of her husband—for such, if not by the law of Scotland, which may be doubtful, Burns certainly was by the law of heaven—and like a good Christian had again turned his daughter out of doors. Had Burns deserted her he had merely been a heartless villain. In making her his lawful wedded wife he did no more than any other man, deserving the name of man, in the same circumstances would have done; and had he not, he would have walked in shame before men, and in fear and trembling before God. But he did so, not only because it was his most sacred duty, but because he loved her better than ever, and without her would have been miserable. Much had she suffered for his sake, and he for hers; but all that distraction and despair which had nearly driven him into a sugar plantation, were over and gone, forgotten utterly, or remembered but as a dismal dream endearing the placid day that for ever dispelled it. He writes about her to Mrs Dunlop and others in terms of sobriety and good sense—"The most placid good nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than commonly handsome figure"—these

he thought in a woman might, with a knowledge of the Scriptures, make a good wife. During the few months he was getting his house ready for her at Ellisland he frequently travelled, with all the fondness of a lover, the long wilderness of moors to Mauchline, where she was in the house of her austere father, reconciled to her at last. And though he has told us that it was his custom, in song-writing, to keep the image of some fair maiden before the eye of his fancy, "some bright particular star," and that Hymen was not the divinity he then invoked, yet it was on one of these visits, between Ellisland and Mossgiel, that he penned under such homely inspiration as precious a love-offering as genius in the passion of hope ever laid in a virgin's bosom. His wife sung it to him that same evening—and indeed he never knew whether or no he had succeeded in any one of his lyrics, till he heard his words and the air together from her voice.

"Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonny lassie lives,
The lassie I loe best:
There wild woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair:
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonny flower that springs,
By fountain, shaw, or green,
There's not a bonny bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean.

Oh blaw ye westlin winds, blaw saft
Amang the leafy trees,
Wi' balmy gale, frae hill and dale,
Bring hame the laden bees;
And bring the lassie back to me
That's aye sae neat and clean;
Ae smile o' her wad banish care,
Sae charming is my Jean.

What sighs and vows amang the knowes
Hae passed atween us twa!
How fond to meet, how wae to part,
That night she gaed awa!
The powers aboon can only ken,
To whom the heart is seen,
That nane can be sae dear to me
As my sweet lovely Jean."

And here we ask you who may be reading these pages, to pause for a little, and consider with yourselves, what up to this time Burns had done to justify the condemnatory judgments that have been passed on his character as a man by so many admirers of his genius as a poet? Compared with that of men of ordinary worth, who have deservedly passed through life with the world's esteem, in what was it lamentably wanting? Not in tenderness, warmth, strength of the natural affections; and they are good till turned to evil. Not in the duties for which they were given, and which they make delights. Of which of these duties was he habitually neglectful? To the holiest of them all next to piety to his Maker, he was faithful beyond most—few better kept the fourth commandment. His youth though soon too impassioned had been long pure. If he were temperate by necessity and not nature, yet he was so as contentedly as if it had been by choice. He had lived on meal and water with some milk, because the family were too poor for better fare; and yet he rose to labour as the lark rises to sing.

In the corruption of our fallen nature he sinned, and, it has been said, became a libertine. Was he ever guilty of deliberate seduction? It is not so recorded; and we believe his whole soul would have recoiled from such wickedness: but let us not affect ignorance of what we all know. Among no people on the face of the earth is the moral code so rigid, with regard to the intercourse of the sexes, as to stamp with ineffaceable disgrace every lapse from virtue; and certainly not among the Scottish peasantry, austere as the spirit of religion has always been, and terrible ecclesiastical censure. Hateful in all eyes is the reprobate—the hoary sinner loathsome; but many a grey head is now deservedly reverenced that would not be so, were the memory of all that has been repented by the Elder, and pardoned unto him, to rise up against him

among the congregation as he entered the House of God. There has been many a rueful tragedy in houses that in after times "seemed asleep." How many good and happy fathers of families, who, were all their past lives to be pictured in ghastly revelation to the eyes of their wives and children, could never again dare to look them in the face! It pleased God to give them a long life; and they have escaped, not by their own strength, far away from the shadows of their misdeeds that are not now suffered to pursue them, but are chained down in the past no more to be let loose. That such things were is a secret none now live to divulge; and though once known they were never emblazoned. But Burns and men like Burns showed the whole world their dark spots by the very light of their genius; and having died in what may almost be called their youth, there the dark spots still are, and men point to them with their fingers, to whose eyes there may seem but small glory in all that effulgence.

Burns now took possession at Whitsuntide (1788) of the farm of Ellisland, while his wife remained at Mossgiel, completing her education in the dairy, till brought home next term to their new house, which the poet set a-building with alacrity, on a plan of his own which was as simple a one as could be devised,—kitchen and dining-room in one, a double-bedded room with a bed-closet, and a garret. The site was pleasant, on the edge of a high bank of the Nith, commanding a wide and beautiful prospect,—holms, plains, woods, and hills, and a long reach of the sweeping river. While the house and offices were growing, he inhabited a hovel close at hand, and though occasionally giving vent to some splenetic humours in letters indited in his sooty cabin, and now and then yielding to fits of despondency about the "ticklish situation of a family of children," he says to his friend Ainslie, "I am decidedly of opinion that the step I have taken is vastly for my happiness." He had to qualify himself for holding his excise commission by six weeks' attendance on the business of that profession at Ayr—and we have seen that he made several visits to Mossgiel. Currie cannot let him thus pass the summer without moralising on his mode of life. "Pleased with surveying the grounds he was about to cultivate, and with the rearing of a building that should give shelter to his wife and children, and, as he fondly hoped, to his own

grey hairs, sentiments of independence buoyed up his mind, pictures of domestic comfort and peace rose on his imagination; and a *few days* passed away, as he himself informs us, the most tranquil, if not the happiest, which he had ever experienced." Let us believe that such days were not few, but many, and that we need not join with the good Doctor in grieving to think that Burns led all the summer a wandering and unsettled life. It could not be stationary; but there is no reason to think that his occasional absence was injurious to his affairs on the farm. Currie writes as if he thought him incapable of self-guidance, and says, "it is to be lamented that, at this critical period of his life, our poet was without the society of his wife and children. A great change had taken place in his situation; his old habits were broken; and the new circumstances in which he was placed were calculated to give a new direction to his thoughts and conduct. But his application to the cares and labours of his farm was interrupted by several visits to his family in Ayrshire; and as the distance was too great for a single day's journey, he generally slept a night at an inn on the road. On such occasions he sometimes fell into company, and forgot the resolutions he had formed. In a little while temptation assailed him nearer home." This is treating Burns like a child, a person of so *facile* a disposition as not to be trusted without a keeper on the king's highway. If he was not fit to ride by himself into Ayrshire, and there was no safety for him at Sanquhar, his case was hopeless out of an asylum. A trustworthy friend attended to the farm as overseer, when he was from home; potatoes, grass, and grain grew though he was away; on September 9th, we find him where he ought to be,—"I am busy with my harvest;" and on the 16th,—"This hovel that I shelter in is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls, and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated with smoke. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle eclat, and bind every day after my reapers." Pity 'twas that there had not been a comfortable house ready furnished for Mrs Burns to step into at the beginning of summer, therein to be brought to bed of "little Frank, who, by the by, I trust will be no discredit to the honourable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance, and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months

older; and likewise an excellent good temper—though, when he pleases, he has a pipe only not quite so loud as the horn that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take the pin out of Stirling bridge."

Dear good old blind Dr Blacklock, about this time, was anxious to know from Burns himself how he was thriving, and indited to him a pleasant epistle.

"Dear Burns, thou brother of my heart,
Both for thy virtues and thy art;
If art it may be call'd in thee,
Which Nature's bounty, large and free,
With pleasure in thy heart diffuses,
And warms thy soul with all the Muses.
Whether to laugh with easy grace,
Thy numbers move the sage's face,
Or bid the softer passions rise,
And ruthless souls with grief surprise,
'Tis Nature's voice distinctly felt
Through thee her organ, thus to melt.

Most anxiously I wish to know,
With thee of late how matters go;
How keeps thy much-loved Jean her health?
What promises thy farm of wealth?
Whether the muse persists to smile,
And all thy anxious cares beguile?
Whether bright fancy keeps alive?
And how thy darling infants thrive?"

It appears, from his reply, that Burns had intrusted Heron with a letter to Blacklock, which the preacher had not delivered, and the poet exclaims,—

"The ill-thief blaw the Heron south!
And never drink be near his drouth!
He tauld mysel by word o' mouth
He'd tak my letter;
I lippen'd to the chiel in trouth
And bade nae better.

But aiblins honest Master Heron,
Had at the time some dainty fair one,
To ware his theologic care on,
And holy study;
And tired o' sauls to waste his lear on,
E'en tried the body."

Currie says in a note, "Mr Heron, author of the History of Scotland lately published, and, among various other works, of *a respectable* life of our poet himself." Burns knew his character well: the unfortunate fellow had talents of no ordinary kind, and there are many good things, and much good writing, in his Life of Burns; but respectable it is not, basely calumnious, and the original source of many of the worst falsehoods even now believed too widely to be truths, concerning the moral character of a man as far superior to himself in virtue as in genius. Burns then tells his venerated friend that he has absolutely become a gauger.

"Ye glaikit, gleesome, dainty damies,
Wha by Castalia's wimplin streamies,
Loup, sing, and lave your pretty limbies,
Ye ken, ye ken,
That strang necessity supreme is
'Mang sons o' men.

I hae a wife and twa wee laddies,
They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies;
Ye ken yoursels my heart right proud is,
I needna vaunt,
But I'll sned besoms—thraw saugh woodies,
Before they want.

Lord help me through this warld o' care!
I'm weary sick o't late and air!
Not but I hae a richer share
Than mony ithers;
But why should ae man better fare,
And a' men brithers?

Come, FIRM RESOLVE, take thou the van,
Thou stalk o' carl-hemp in man!
And let us mind, faint heart ne'er wan
A lady fair:
Wha does the utmost that he can,
Will whiles do mair.

But to conclude my silly rhyme,
(I'm scant o' verse, and scant o' time),
TO MAKE A HAPPY FIRE-SIDE CLIME
TO WEANS AND WIFE,
THAT'S THE TRUE PATHOS AND SUBLIME
OF HUMAN LIFE."

These noble stanzas were written towards the end of October, and in another month Burns brought his wife home to Ellisland, and his three children, for she had twice born him twins. The happiest period of his life, we have his own words for it, was that winter.

But why not say that the three years he lived at Ellisland were all happy, as happiness goes in this world? As happy perhaps as they might have been had he been placed in some other condition apparently far better adapted to yield him what all human hearts do most desire. His wife never had an hour's sickness, and was always cheerful as day, one of those

"Sound healthy children of the God of heaven,"

whose very presence is positive pleasure, and whose silent contentedness with her lot inspires comfort into a husband's heart, when at times oppressed with a mortal heaviness that no words could lighten. Burns says with gloomy grandeur, "There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care which makes the dreary objects seem larger than life." The objects seen by imagination; and he who suffers thus cannot be relieved by any direct appliances to that faculty, only by those that touch the heart—the homelier the more sanative, and none so sure as a wife's affectionate ways, quietly moving about the house affairs, which, insignificant as they are in themselves, are felt to be little truthful realities that banish those monstrous phantoms, showing them to be but glooms and shadows.

And how fared the Gauger? Why, he did his work. Currie says, "His farm no longer occupied the principal part of his care or his thoughts. It was not at Ellisland that he was now in general to be found. Mounted on horseback, this high-minded poet was pursuing the defaulters of the revenue among the hills and vales of Nithsdale; his roving eye wandering over the charms of nature, and muttering his wayward fancies as he moved along." And many a happy day he had when thus riding about the country in search of smugglers of all sorts, zealous against all manner of contraband. He delighted in the broad brow of the day, whether glad or gloomy, like his own forehead; in the open air whether still or stormy, like his own heart. While "pursuing the defaulters of the revenue," a gauger has not always to track them

by his eyes or his nose. Information has been lodged of their whereabouts, and he deliberately makes a seizure. Sentimentalists may see in this something very shocking to the delicate pleasures of susceptible minds, but Burns did not; and some of his sweetest lyrics, redolent of the liquid dew of youth, were committed to whitey-brown not scented by the rose's attar. Burns on duty was always as sober as a judge. A man of his sense knew better than to muddle his brains, when it was needful to be quick-witted and ready-handed too; for he had to do with old women who were not to be sneezed at, and with middle-aged men who could use both club and cutlass.

"He held them with his glittering eye;"

but his determined character was not the worse of being exhibited on broad shoulders. They drooped, as you know, but from the habits of a strong man who had been a labourer from his youth upwards, and a gauger's life was the very one that might have been prescribed to a man like him, subject to low spirits, by a wise physician. Smugglers themselves are seldom drunkards—gaugers not often—though they take their dram; your drunkards belong to that comprehensive class that cheat the excise.

Then Burns was not always "mounted on horseback pursuing the defaulters of the revenue among the hills and vales of Nithsdale;" he sat sometimes by himself in Friar's-Carse Hermitage.

"Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deckt in silken stole,
Grave these counsels on thy soul.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;
Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour,
Fear not clouds will always lower.

As the shades of ev'ning close,
Beck'ning thee to long repose;
As life itself becomes disease,
Seek the chimney-neuk of ease;
There ruminate with sober thought,
On all thou'st seen, and heard, and wrought;

And teach the sportive younkers round,
Saws of experience, sage and sound.
Say, man's true, genuine estimate,
The grand criterion of his fate,
Is not, Art thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?
Did many talents gild thy span?
Or frugal nature grudge thee one?
Tell them, and press it on their mind,
As thou thyself must shortly find,
The smile or frown of awful Heav'n,
To virtue or to vice is giv'n.
Say, to be just, and kind, and wise,
There solid self-enjoyment lies;
That foolish, selfish, faithless ways
Lead to the wretched, vile, and base.
Thus resign'd and quiet, creep
To the bed of lasting sleep;
Sleep, whence thou shalt ne'er awake,
Night, where dawn shall never break,
Till future life, future no more,
To light and joy the good restore,
To light and joy unknown before.

Stranger, go! Heav'n be thy guide!
Quod the beadsman of Nith-side."

Burns acquired the friendship of many of the best families in the Vale of Nith, at Friar's Carse, Terraughty, Blackwood, Closeburn, Dalswinton, Glenae, Kirkconnel, Arbigland, and other seats of the gentry old or new. Such society was far more enjoyable than that of Edinburgh, for here he was not a lion but a man. He had his jovial hours, and sometimes they were excessive, as the whole world knows from "the Song of the Whistle." But the Laureate did not enter the lists—if he had, it is possible he might have conquered Craigdarroch. These were formidable orgies; but we have heard "O! Willie brewed a peck o' maut" sung after a presbytery dinner, the bass of the moderator giving somewhat of a solemn character to the chorus.

But why did Burns allow his genius to lie idle—why did he not construct some great work, such as a Drama? His genius did not lie idle, for, over and above the songs alluded to, he wrote ever so many for his friend Johnson's *Museum*.

Nobody would have demanded from him a Drama, had he not divulged his determination to compose one about "The Bruce," with the homely title of "Rob M'Quechan's Elshin." But Burns did not think himself a universal genius, and at this time writes: "No man knows what nature has fitted him for till he try; and if after a preparatory course of some years' study of men and books I shall find myself unequal to the task, there is no harm done. Virtue and study are their own reward. I have got Shakespeare, and begun with him," &c. He knew that a great National Drama was not to be produced as easily as "The Cottar's Saturday Night;" and says, "though the rough material of fine writing is undoubtedly the gift of genius, the workmanship is as certainly the united efforts of labour, attention, and pains."

And here, one day between breakfast and dinner he composed "Tam o' Shanter." The fact is hardly credible, but we are willing to believe it. Dorset only corrected his famous "To all ye ladies now on land, we men at sea indite," the night before an expected engagement, a proof of his self-possession; but he had been working at it for days. Dryden dashed off his "Alexander's Feast" in no time, but the labour of weeks was bestowed on it before it assumed its present shape. "Tam o' Shanter" is superior in force and fire to that Ode. Never did genius go at such a gallop—setting off at score, and making play, but without whip or spur, from starting to winning post. All is inspiration. His wife with her weans a little way aside among the broom watched him at work as he was striding up and down the brow of the Scaur, and reciting to himself like one *demented*,—

> "Now Tam, O Tam! had they been queans,
> A' plump and strapping, in their teens;
> Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
> Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!
> Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
> That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
> I wad hae gien them aff my hurdies,
> For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!"

His bonny Jean must have been sorely perplexed—but she was familiar with all his moods, and like a good wife left him

to his cogitations. It is "all made out of the builder's brain;" for the story that suggested it is no story at all, the dull lie of a drunkard dotard. From the poet's imagination it came forth a perfect poem, impregnated with the native spirit of Scottish superstition. Few or none of our old traditionary tales of witches are very appalling—they had not their origin in the depths of the people's heart; there is a meanness in their mysteries—the ludicrous mixes with the horrible: much matter there is for the poetical, and more perhaps for the picturesque; but the pathetic is seldom found there; and never—for Shakespeare, we fear, was not a Scotchman—the sublime. Let no man therefore find fault with "Tam o' Shanter," because it strikes not a deeper chord. It strikes a chord that twangs strangely, and we know not well what it means. To vulgar eyes, too, were such unaccountable ongoings most often revealed of old; such seers were generally *doited or dazed* — half-born idiots or *neerdoweels in drink*. Had Milton's Satan shown his face in Scotland, folk either would not have known him, or thought him mad. The devil is much indebted to Burns for having raised his character without impairing his individuality—

> "O thou! whatever title suit thee,
> Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
> Wha in yon cavern grim and sootie,
> Closed under hatches,
> Spairges about the brumstane cootie,
> To scaud puir wretches!
>
> Hear me, auld *Hangie*, for a wee,
> And let puir damned bodies be;
> I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
> E'en to a *deil*,
> To skelp and scaud puir dogs like me,
> And hear us squeel!"

This is conciliatory; and we think we see him smile. We can almost believe for a moment that it does give him no great pleasure, that he is not inaccessible to pity, and at times would fain devolve his duty upon other hands, though we cannot expect him to resign. The poet knows that he is the Prince of the Air.

"Great is thy pow'r, and great thy fame;
Far ken'd and noted is thy name;
And though yon lowin heugh's thy hame,
Thou travels far;
And faith! thou's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate nor scaur.

Whyles rangin like a roarin lion,
For prey a' holes and corners tryin;
Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin,
Tirlin the kirks;
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin,
Unseen thou lurks."

That is magnificent—Milton's self would have thought so—and it could have been written by no man who had not studied Scripture. The Address is seen to take; the Old Intrusionist is glorified by "tirlin the kirks;" and the poet thinks it right to lower his pride.

"*I've heard my reverend Grannie say,*
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld ruin'd castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's 'way,
Wi' eldritch croon.

When twilight did my Grannie summon
To say her prayers, douce, honest woman!
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin,
Wi' eerie drone;
Or, rustlin, through the boortrees comin
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot doun wi' sklentin light,
Wi' you, mysel, I gat a fright,
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,
Wi' wavin sough."

Throughout the whole Address, the elements are so combined in him, as to give the world "assurance o' a deil;" but then it is the Deil of Scotland.

Just so in "Tam o' Shanter." We know not what some great German genius like Goethe might have made of him; but we much mistake the matter, if "Tam o' Shanter" at

Alloway Kirk be not as exemplary a piece of humanity as Faustus on May-day Night upon the Hartz Mountains. Faust does not well know what he would be at, but Tam does; and though his views of human life be rather hazy, he has glimpses given him of the invisible world. His wife—but her tongue was no scandal—calls him

> "A skellum,
> A bletherin, blusterin, drunken blellum;
> That, frae November till October,
> Ae market-day thou wasna sober,
> That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
> Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
> That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
> The smith and thee gat roarin fou on;
> That at the L—d's house, ev'n on Sunday,
> Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
> She prophesied, that, late or soon,
> Thou wad be found deep drown'd in Doon;
> Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,
> By Alloway's auld haunted kirk."

That is her view of the subject; but what is Tam's? The same as Wordsworth's,—

"He sits down to his cups, while the storm is roaring, and heaven and earth are in confusion; the night is driven on by song and tumultuous noise; laughter and jests thicken as the beverage improves upon the palate; conjugal fidelity archly bends to the service of general benevolence; selfishness is not absent, but wearing the mask of social cordiality; and while these various elements of humanity are blended into one proud and happy composition of elated spirits, the anger of the tempest without doors only heightens and sets off the enjoyment within. I pity him who cannot perceive that, in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect.

> 'Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
> O'er a' the *ills* o' life victorious.'

What a lesson do these words convey of charitable indulgence for the vicious habits of the principal actor in the scene and of those who resemble him!—men who to the rigidly virtuous are objects almost of loathing, and whom therefore they cannot serve. The poet, penetrating the unsightly and disgusting surfaces of things, has unveiled, with exquisite skill, the finer ties of imagination and feeling that often bind those beings to practices productive of much unhap-

piness to themselves and to those whom it is their duty to cherish; and as far as he puts the reader into possession of this intelligent sympathy, he qualifies him for exercising a salutary influence over the minds of those who are thus deplorably deceived."

We respectfully demur from the opinion of this wise and benign judge, that "there was no moral purpose in all this, though there is a moral effect." So strong was his moral purpose, and so deep the moral feeling moved within him by the picture he had so vividly imagined, that Burns pauses, in highest moral mood, at the finishing touch,

> "Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious;"

and then, by imagery of unequalled loveliness, illustrates an universal and everlasting truth:

> "But pleasures are like poppies spread,
> You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
> Or like the snowfall in the river,
> A moment white—then melts for ever;
> Or like the borealis race,
> That flit ere you can point their place;
> Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
> Evanishing amid the storm."

Next instant he returns to Tam; and, humanised by that exquisite poetry, we cannot help being sorry for him "mountin his beast on sic a night." At the first clap of thunder he forgets Souter Johnny—how "conjugal fidelity archly bent to the service of general benevolence"—such are the terms in which the philosophical Wordsworth speaks of

> "The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
> Wi' favours, secret, sweet, and precious;"

and as the haunted Ruin draws nigh, he remembers not only Kate's advice but her prophecy. He has passed by some fearful places; at the slightest touch of the necromancer, how fast one after another wheels by, telling at what a rate Tam rode! And we forget that we are not riding behind him,

> "When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
> Kirk-Alloway seemed in a bleeze!"

We defy any man of woman born to tell us who these witches

and warlocks are, and why the devil brought them here into Alloway Kirk. True,

> "This night, a child might understand,
> The deil had business on his hand;"

but that is not the question—the question is *what* business? Was it a ball given him on the anniversary of the Fall?

> "There sat Auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
> A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
> To gie them music was his charge:"

and pray who is to pay the piper? We fear that young witch Nanny!

> "For Satan glowr'd, and fidged fu' fain,
> And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main:"

and this may be the nuptial night of the Prince—for that tyke is he—of the Fallen Angels!

How was Tam able to stand the sight, "glorious" and "heroic" as he was, of the open presses?

> "Coffins stood round like open presses,
> That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
> And by some devilish cantrip slight,
> Each in its cauld hand held a light."

Because, show a man some sight that is altogether miraculously dreadful, and he either faints or feels no fear. Or say rather, let a man stand the first *glower* at it, and he will make comparatively light of the details. There was Auld Nick himself, there was no mistaking him, and there were

> "Wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
> Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,
> Lowping an' flinging—"

to such dancing what cared Tam who held the candles? He was bedevilled, bewarlocked, and bewitched, and therefore

> "Able
> To note upon the haly table,
> A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
> Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
> A thief, new-cutted frae a rape,
> Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
> Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted;

Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft."

This collection has all the effect of a selection. The bodies were not placed there; but following each other's heels they stretched themselves out of their own accord upon the haly table. They had received a summons to the festival, which murderer and murdered must obey. But mind ye, Tam could not see what you see. Who told him that *that* garter had strangled a babe? That *that* was a parricide's knife? Nobody—and that is a flaw. For Tam looks with his bodily eyes only, and can know only what they show him; but Burns knew it, and believed Tam knew it too; and we know it, for Burns tells us, and we believe Tam as wise as ourselves; for we almost turn Tam—the poet himself being the only real warlock of them all.

You know why that Haly Table is so pleasant to the apples of all those evil eyes? They feed upon the dead, not merely because they love wickedness, but because they inspire it into the quick. Who ever murdered his father but at the instigation of that "towzie tyke, black, grim, and large?" Who but for him ever strangled her new-born child? Scimitars and tomahawks! Why, such weapons never were in use in Scotland. True. But they have long been in use in the wildernesses of the western world, and among the orient cities of Mahound, and his empire extends to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And here we shall say a few words, which perhaps were expected from us when speaking a little while ago of some of his first productions, about Burns's humorous strains, more especially those in which he has sung the praises of joviality and good-fellowship, as it has been thought by many that in them are conspicuously displayed not only some striking qualities of his poetical genius, but likewise of his personal character. Among the countless number of what are called convivial songs floating in our literature, how few seem to have been inspired by such a sense and spirit of social enjoyment as men can sympathise with in their ordinary moods, when withdrawn from the festive board, and engaged without

blame in the common amusements or recreations of a busy or a studious life! The finest of these few have been gracefully and gaily thrown off, in some mirthful minute, by Shakespeare, and Ben Johnson, and "the Rest," inebriating the mind as with "divine gas" into sudden exhilaration, that passes away not only without headache, but with heartache for a time allayed by the sweet *afflatus*. In our land, too, as in Greece of old, genius has imbibed inspiration from the wine-cup, and sung of human life in strains befitting poets who desired that their foreheads should perpetually be wreathed with flowers. But putting aside them and their little lyres, with some exceptions, how nauseous are the bacchanalian songs of Merry England!

On this topic we but touch; and request you to recollect that there are not half-a-dozen, if so many, drinking songs in all Burns. "Willie brewed a peck o' maut" is, indeed, the chief; and you cannot even look at it without crying, "O rare Rob Burns!" So far from inducing you to believe that the poet was addicted to drinking, the freshness and fervour of its glee convince you that it came gushing out of a healthful heart, in the exhilaration of a night that needed not the influence of the flowing bowl, which friendship, nevertheless, did so frequently replenish. Wordsworth, who has told the world that he is a water-drinker, and in the lake country he can never be at a loss for his favourite beverage, regards this song with the complacency of a philosopher, knowing well that it is all a pleasant exaggeration; and that had the moon not lost patience and gone to bed, she would have seen "Rab and Allan" on their way back to Ellisland, along the bold banks of the Nith, as steady as a brace of bishops.

Of the contest immortalised in 'The Whistle,' it may be observed, that in the course of events it is likely to be as rare as enormous; and that as centuries intervened between Sir Robert Laurie's victory over the Dane in the reign of James VI., and Craigdarroch's victory over Sir Robert Laurie in that of George III., so centuries, in all human probability, will elapse before another such battle will be lost and won. It is not a little amusing to hear good Dr Currie on this passage in the life of Burns. In the text of his Memoir he says, speaking of the poet's intimacy with the best families in Nithsdale, "Their social parties too often seduced him from his rustic

labours and his rustic fare, overthrew the unsteady fabric of his resolutions, *and inflamed those propensities which temperance might have weakened, and prudence ultimately suppressed.*" In a note he adds, in illustration: "The poem of 'The Whistle' celebrates a bacchanalian event among the gentlemen of Nithsdale, where Burns appears as umpire. Mr Riddell died before our bard, and some elegiac verses to his memory will be found in Volume IV. From him, and from all the members of his family, Burns received not kindness only, but friendship; *and the society he met with in general at Friar's Carse was calculated to improve his habits, as well as his manners.* Mr Fergusson of Craigdarroch, *so well known for his eloquence and social habits*, died soon after our poet. Sir Robert Laurie, the third person in the drama, survives; and has since been engaged in contests of a bloodier nature—long may he live to fight the battles of his country! (1799)." Three better men lived not in the shire; but they were gentlemen, and Burns was but an exciseman; and Currie, unconsciously influenced by an habitual deference to rank, pompously moralises on the poor poet's "propensities, which temperance might have weakened, and prudence ultimately suppressed;" while in the same breath, and with the same ink, he eulogises the rich squire for "his eloquence and social habits," so well calculated to "improve the habits as well as the manners" of the bard and gauger! Now suppose that "the heroes" had been, not Craigdarroch, Glenriddel, and Maxwellton, but Burns, Mitchell, and Findlater, a gauger, a supervisor, and a collector of excise, and that the contest had taken place not at Friar's Carse, but at Ellisland, not for a time-honoured hereditary ebony whistle, but a wooden ladle not a week old, and that Burns the Victorious had acquired an implement more elegantly fashioned, though of the same materials, than the one taken from his mouth the moment he was born, what blubbering would there not have been among his biographers! James Currie, how exhortatory! Josiah Walker, how lachrymose!

> "Next uprose our Bard like a prophet in drink:
> 'Craigdarroch, thou'lt soar when creation shall sink!
> But if thou would flourish immortal in rhyme,
> Come—one bottle more—and have at the sublime!

Thy line, they have struggled for Freedom with Bruce,
Shall heroes and patriots ever produce :
So thine be the laurel, and mine be the bay ;
The field thou hast won, by yon bright god of day !"

How very shocking ! Then only hear in what a culpable spirit Burns writes to Riddel, on the forenoon of the day of battle !—

Sir,—Big with the idea of this important day at Friar's Carse, I have invoked the elements and skies, in the fond persuasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific import. Yester-night, until a very late hour, did I wait with anxious horror for the appearance of some comet firing half the sky ; or aerial armies of conquering Scandinavians, darting athwart the startled heavens, rapid as the ragged lightning, and horrid as those convulsions of nature that bury nations. The elements, however, seem to take the matter very quietly ; they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes, and the mighty claret-shed of the day. For me, as Thomson in his 'Winter' says of the storm, I shall '*Hear* astonished, and astonished sing.' To leave the heights of Parnassus and come to the humble vale of prose, I have some misgivings that I take too much upon me, when I request you to get your guest, Sir Robert Laurie, to post the two enclosed covers for me, the one of them to Sir William Cunninghame of Robertland. Bart., Kilmarnock—the other to Mr Allan Masterton, writing-master, Edinburgh. The first has a kindred claim on Sir Robert, as being a brother baronet, and likewise a keen Foxite ; the other is one of the worthiest men in the world, and a man of real genius ; so allow me to say he has a fraternal claim on you. I want them franked for to-morrow, as I cannot get them to the post to-night. I shall send a servant again for them in the evening. Wishing that your head may be crowned with laurels to-night, and free from aches to-morrow, I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply-indebted and obedient servant, R. B.

Why, you see that this "Letter," and "The Whistle"—perhaps an improper poem in priggish eyes, but in the eyes of Bacchus the best of triumphal odes—make up the whole of Burns's share in this transaction. *He was not at the Carse.* The "three potent heroes" were too thoroughly gentlemen to have asked a fourth to sit by with an empty bottle before him as umpire of that debate. Burns that evening was sitting with his eldest child on his knee, teaching it to say Dad—

that night he was lying in his own bed, with bonnie Jean by his side—and yon "bright god of day" saluted him at morning on the Scaur above the glittering Nith.

Turn to the passages in his youthful poetry, where he speaks of himself or others "wi' just a drappie in their ee." Would you that he had never written Death and Dr Hornbook?

"The clachan yill had made me canty—
I wasna fou, but just had plenty;
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent aye
To free the ditches;
And hillocks, stanes, and bushes kenn'd aye
Frae ghaists and witches.

The risin moon began to glow'r
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre:
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,
I set mysel;
But whether she had three or four,
I couldna tell.

I was come round about the hill,
And toddlin doun on Willie's mill,
Settin my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker:
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker.

I there wi' Something did forgather," &c.

Then and there, as you learn, ensued that "celestial colloquy divine," which being reported drove the doctor out of the country, by unextinguishable laughter, into Glasgow, where half a century afterwards he died universally respected. Something had more to say, and long before that time Burns had been sobered.

"But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell
Some wee short hour ayont the twal,
Which raised us baith:
I took the way that pleased mysel,
And sae did Death."

In those pregnant Epistles to his friends, in which his generous and noble character is revealed so sincerely, he now and then alludes to the socialities customary in Kyle; and the

good people of Scotland have always enjoyed such genial pictures. When promising himself the purest pleasures society can afford, in company with "Auld Lapraik," whom he warmly praises for the tenderness and truthfulness of his "sangs"—

"There was ae sang, amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleased me best,
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife:
It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast,
A' to the life;"

and when luxuriating in the joy of conscious genius holding communion with the native muse, he exclaims—

"Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then, tho I drudge thro' dub and mire
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart;"

where does Burns express a desire to meet his brother-bard? Where but in the resorts of their fellow-labourers, when released from toil, and flinging weariness to the wind, they flock into the heart of some holiday, attired in sunshine, and feeling that life is life?

"But Mauchline race, or Mauchline fair,
I should be proud to meet you there;
We'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
If we forgather,
An' hae a swap o' *rhymin-ware*
Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,
An' kirsen him wi' reekin water;
Syne we'll sit doun and tak our whitter,
To cheer our heart;
And, faith, we'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

Awa, ye selfish war'ly race,
Wha think that havins, sense, and grace,
Ev'n love and friendship, should give place
To *catch the plack!*
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your *being* on the terms,
'Each aid the others,'
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!"

Yet after all, "the four-gill chap" clattered but on paper. Lapraik was an elderly man of sober life, impoverished by a false friend in whom he had confided; and Burns, who wore good clothes, and paid his tailor as punctually as the men he dealt with, had not much money out of seven pounds a-year to spend in "the change-house." He allowed no man to pay his "lawin," but neither was he given to treating—save the sex; and in his "Epistle to James Smith" he gives a more correct account of his habits, when he goes thus off careeringly—

"My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, 'Ye Pow'rs!' and warm implore,
'Though I should wander *terra* o'er
In all her climes,
Grant me but this—I ask no more—
Aye rowth o' rhymes.
* * * * *
While ye are pleased to keep me hale,
I'll sit down owre my scanty meal,
Be't water-brose or muslin-kail,
Wi' cheerfu' face,
As lang's the Muses dinna fail
To say the grace."

Read the "Auld Farmer's New-Year Morning Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie." Not a soul but them-two-selves is in the stable—in the farmyard—nor, as far as we think of, in the house. Yes—there is one in the house—but she is somewhat infirm, and not yet out of bed. Sons and daughters have long since been married, and have houses of their own—such of them as may not have been buried. The servants are employed somewhere else out of doors—and so are the "four gallant brutes as e'er did draw" a moiety of Maggie's "bairn-time." The Address is an Autobiography. The master remembers himself, along with his mare—in days when she was "dappl't, sleek, and glaizie, a bonnie grey;" and he "the pride o' a' the parishin."

"That day we pranced wi' muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonny bride;
And sweet and graceful she did ride,
Wi' maiden air!
Kyle Stewart I could braggit wide,
For sic a pair."

What passages in their common life does he next select to "roose" mare and master? "In tug or tow?" In cart, plough, or harrow? These all rise before him at the right time, and in a cheerful spirit; towards the close of his address he grows serious, but not sad—as well he may; and at the close, as well he may, tender and grateful. But the image he sees galloping, next to that of the Broose, comes second, because it is second best,—

"When thou and I were young and skeigh,
And stable-meals at fairs were dreigh,
How thou wad prance, and snore, and skreigh,
And tak the road!
Toun's bodies ran, and stood abeigh,
And ca't thee mad.

When thou was corn't, and I was mellow,
We took the road aye like a swallow!"

We do not blame the old farmer for having got occasionally mellow some thirty years ago—we do not blame Burns for making him pride himself on his shame; nay, we bless them both as we hear these words whispered close to the auld Mare's lug,—

"Mony a sair daurk we twa hae wrought,
And wi' the weary warl' fought!
And mony an anxious day, I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.

And think na, my auld trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin,
And thy auld days may end in starvin,
For my last *fou*,
A heapit *stimpart*, I'll reserve ane
Laid by for you.

We've worn to crazy years thegither;
We'll toyte about wi' ane anither;
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether,
To some hain'd rig,
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather,
Wi' sma' fatigue."

Or will you turn to "The Twa Dogs," and hear Luath, in whom the best humanities mingle with the canine—the Poet's own colley, whom some cruel wretch murdered; and gibbeted to everlasting infamy would have been the murderer, had Burns but known his name?

"The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie weans and faithfu' wives;
The prattling things are just their pride,
That sweetens a' their fireside.

And whiles twalpenny worth o' nappy
Can mak the bodies unco happy;
They lay aside their private cares,
To mend the Kirk and State affairs:
They'll talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation's comin,
An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.

As bleak-faced Hallowmass returns,
They get the jovial, rantin kirns,
When rural life, o' ev'ry station,
Unite in common recreation;
Love blinks, Wit slaps, and social Mirth
Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.

That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty win's;
The nappy reeks wi' mantlin ream,
And sheds a heart-inspirin steam;
The luntin pipe, and sneeshin mill,
Are handed round wi' right guid will;
The cantie auld folks crackin crouse,
The young anes rantin thro' the house—
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them."

Yet how happens it that in the "Halloween" no mention is made of this source of enjoyment, and that the parties con-

cerned pursue the ploy with unflagging passion through all its charms and spells? Because the festival is kept alive by the poetic power of superstition that night awakened from its slumber in all those simple souls; and *that* serves instead of strong drink. They fly from freak to freak, without a thought but of the witcheries—the means and appliances needful to make them potent; this Burns knew to be nature, and therefore he delays all "creature comforts" till the end, when the curtain has dropped on that visionary stage, and the actors return to the floor of their everyday world. Then—

> "Wi' merry sangs, and friendly cracks,
> I wat they didna weary;
> And unco tales, and funny jokes,
> Their sports were cheap and cheery,
> Till *butter'd so'ns*, wi' fragrant lunt,
> Set a' their gabs a-steerin;
> Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,
> They parted aff careerin
> Fu' blythe that night."

We see no reason why, in the spirit of these observations, moralists may not read with pleasure and approbation, "The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer to the Scotch Representatives in the House of Commons." Its political economy is as sound as its patriotism is stirring; and he must be indeed a dunce who believes that Burns uttered it either as a defence or an encouragement of a national vice, or that it is calculated to stimulate poor people into pernicious habits. It is an Address that Cobbett, had he been a Scotsman and one of the Forty-Five, would have rejoiced to lay on the table of the House of Commons; for Cobbett, in all that was best of him, was a kind of Burns in his way, and loved the men who work. He maintained the cause of malt, and it was a leading article in the creed of his faith that the element distilled therefrom is like the air they breathe; if the people have it not, they die. Beer may be best; and Burns was the champion of beer, as well as of what bears a brisker name. He spoke of it in "The Earnest Cry," and likewise in the "Scotch Drink," as one of the staffs of life which had been struck from the poor man's hand by fiscal oppression. Tea was then little practised in Ayrshire cottages; and we do not at this moment remember

the word in *Burns's Poems*. He threatens a rising if Ministers will not obey the voice of the people :—

"Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue ;
She's just a devil wi' a rung ;
And if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,
Though by the neck she should be strung,
She'll no desert."

In the Postscript, the patriotism and poetry of "The Earnest Cry" wax stronger and brighter ; and no drunkard would dare to read aloud in the presence of men—by heart he never could get it—such a strain as this, familiar to many million ears :—

"Let half-starved slaves in warmer skies
See future wines, rich clust'ring, rise ;
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But blythe and frisky,
She eyes her freeborn, martial boys
Tak aff their whisky.

What though their Phœbus kinder warms,
While fragrance blooms, and beauty charms ;
When wretches range, in famish'd swarms,
The scented groves,
Or hounded forth, dishonour arms
In hungry droves.

Their gun's a burden on their shouther ;
They downa bide the stink o' pouther ;
Their bauldest thought's a hank'rin swither
To stand or rin,
Till skelp—a shot—they're aff, a' throwther,
To save their skin.

But bring a Scotsman frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say such is Royal George's will,
And there's the foe,
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow.

Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him ;
Death comes, wi' fearless eye he sees him ;
Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gies him :
And when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin lea'es him
In faint huzzas."

These are not the sentiments of a man who "takes an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains." Nor is there anything to condemn, when looked at in the light with which genius invests them, in the pictures presented to us in "Scotch Drink," of some of the familiar scenes of humble life, whether of busy work, or as busy recreation, and some of home-felt incidents interesting to all that live—such as "when skirlin weanies see the light"—animated and invigorated to the utmost pitch of tension, beyond the reach of the jaded spirits of the labouring poor—so at least the poet makes us for the time willing to believe—when unaided by that elixir he so fervidly sings. Who would wish the following lines expunged? Who may not, if he chooses, so qualify their meaning as to make them true? Who will not pardon the first two, if they need pardon, for sake of the last two that need none? For surely you, who, though guilty of no excess, fare sumptuously every day, will not find it in your hearts to grudge the "poor man's wine" to the Cottar after that "Saturday Night" of his, painted for you to the life by his own son, Robert Burns!

"Thou clears the head o' doited Lear;
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair,
At's weary toil;
Thou brightens even dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

Aft clad in massy, siller weed,
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;
Yet humbly kind in time o' need,
The puir man's wine;
His wee drap parritch, or his bread,
Thou kitchens fine."

Gilbert, in his excellent vindication of his brother's character, tells us that at the time when many of those "rhapsodies respecting drinking" were composed and first published, few people were less addicted to drinking than he; and that he assumed a poetical character, very different from that of the man at the time. It has been said that Scotsmen have no humour—no perception of humour—that we are all plain matter-of-fact people—not without some strength of under-

standing—but grave to a degree on occasions when races more favoured by nature are gladsome to an excess; and—

"In gay delirium rob them of themselves."

This judgment on our national characteristics implies a familiar acquaintance with Scottish poetry from Dunbar to Burns. It would be nearer the truth—though still wide of it—to affirm, that we have more humour than all the rest of the inhabitants of this earth besides; but this at least is true, that, unfortunately for ourselves, we have too much humour, and that it has sometimes been allowed to flow out of its proper province, and mingle itself with thoughts and things that ought for ever to be kept sacred in the minds of the people. A few words by-and-by on this subject; meanwhile, with respect to his "rhapsodies about drinking," Burns knew that not only had all the states, stages, and phases of inebriety been humorously illustrated by the comic genius of his country's most popular poets, but that the people themselves, in spite of their deep moral and religious conviction of the sinfulness of intemperance, were prone to look on its indulgences in every droll and ludicrous aspect they could assume, according to the infinite variety of the modifications of individual character. As a poet dealing with life as it lay before and around him, so far from seeking to avoid, he eagerly seized on these; and having in the constitution of his own being as much humour and as rich as ever mixed with the higher elements of genius, he sometimes gave vent to its perceptions and emotions in strains perfectly irresistible—even to the most serious—who had to force themselves back into their habitual and better state, before they could regard them with due condemnation.

But humour in men of genius is always allied to pathos—its exquisite touches

"On the pale cheek of sorrow awaken a smile,
And illumine the eye that was dim with a tear."

So is it a thousand times with the humour of Burns—and we have seen it so in our quotations from these very "Rhapsodies." He could sit with "rattlin, roarin Willie"—and when he belonged to the Crochallan Fencibles, "he was the king o' a' the core." But where he usually sat up late at night, during those glorious hard-working years, was a low

loft above a stable—so low that he had to stoop even when he was sitting at a deal table three feet by two—with his "heart inditing a good matter" to a plough-boy, who *read it up* to the poet before they lay down on the same truckle bed.

Burns had as deep an insight as ever man had into the moral evils of the poor man's character, condition, and life. From many of them he remained free to the last; some he suffered late and early. What were his struggles we know, yet we know but in part, before he was overcome. But it does not appear that he thought intemperance the worst moral evil of the people, or that to the habits it forms had chiefly to be imputed their falling short of or away from that character enjoined by the law written and unwritten, and without which, preserved in its great lineaments, there cannot be to the poor man, any more than the rich, either power or peace. He believed that, but for "man's inhumanity to man," this might be a much better earth; that they who live by the sweat of their brows would wipe them with pride, so that the blood did but freely circulate from their hearts; that creatures endowed with a moral sense and discourse of reason would follow their dictates, in preference to all solicitations to enjoyment from those sources that flow to them in common with all things that have life, so that they were but allowed the rights and privileges of nature, and not made to bow down to a servitude inexorable as necessity, but imposed, as he thought, on their necks as a yoke by the very hands which Providence had kept free;—believing all this, and nevertheless knowing and feeling, often in bitterness of heart and prostration of spirit, that there is far worse evil, because self-originating and self-inhabiting, within the invisible world of every human soul, Burns had no reprobation to inflict on the lighter sins of the oppressed, in sight of the heavier ones of the oppressor; and when he did look into his own heart and the hearts of his brethren in toil and in trouble, for those springs of misery which are for ever welling there, and need no external blasts or torrents to lift them from their beds till they overflow their banks, and inundate ruinously life's securest pastures, he saw THE PASSIONS to which are given power and dominion for bliss or for bale—of them in his sweetest, loftiest inspirations, he sung as a poet all he felt as a man; willing to let his fancy in lighter moods dally with inferior things and merry mea-

sures—even with the very meat and drink that sustains man who is but grass, and like the flower of the field flourisheth and is cut down, and raked away out of the sunshine into the shadow of the grave.

That Burns did not only not set himself to dissuade poor people from drinking, but that he indited "rhapsodies" about "Scotch Drink" and "Earnest Cries," will not, then, seem at all surprising to poor people themselves, nor very culpable even in the eyes of the most sober among them; whatever may be the light in which some rich people regard such delinquencies, your more-in-sorrow-than-anger moralists, who are their own butlers, and sleep with the key of the wine-cellar under their pillow. His poetry is very dear to the people, and we venture to say, that they understand its spirit as well as the best of those for whom it was not written; for written it was for his own Order—the enlightened majority of Christian men. No fear of their being blind to its venial faults, its more serious imperfections, and, if such there be, its sins. There are austere eyes in workshops, and in the fields, intolerant of pollution; stern judges of themselves and others preside in those courts of conscience that are not open to the public; nevertheless, they have tender hearts, and they yearn with exceeding love towards those of their brethren who have brightened or elevated their common lot. Latent virtues in such poetry as Burns's are continually revealing themselves to readers, whose condition is felt to be uncertain, and their happiness to fluctuate with it; adversity puts to the test our opinions and beliefs, equally with our habits and our practices; and the most moral and religious man that ever worked from morning to night, that his family might have bread—daily from youth upwards till now he is threescore and ten—might approve of the sentiment of that Song, feel it in all its fervour, and express it in all its glee, in which age meeting with age, and again hand and heart linked together, the "trusty feres," bring back the past in a sun-burst on the present, and, thoughtless of the future, pour out unblamed libations to the days "o' auld lang syne!"

It seems to us very doubtful if any poetry could become popular, of which the prevalent spirit is not in accordance with that of the people, as well in those qualities we grieve to call vices, as in those we are happy to pronounce virtues. It

is not sufficient that they be moved for a time against their will, by some moral poet desirous, we shall suppose, of purifying and elevating their character, by the circulation of better sentiments than those with which they have been long familiar; it is necessary that the will shall go along with their sympathies to preserve them, perhaps, from being turned into antipathies; and that is not likely to happen, if violence be done to long-established customs and habits, which may have acquired not only the force, but something too of the sanctity, of nature.

But it is certain that to effect any happy change in the manners or the morals of a people—to be in any degree instrumental to the attainment or preservation of their dearest interests—a Poet must deal with them in the spirit of truth; and that he may do so, he must not only be conversant with their condition, but wise in knowledge, that he may understand what he sees, and whence it springs—the evil and the good. Without it, he can never help to remove a curse or establish a blessing; for a while his denunciations or his praises may seem to be working wonders—his genius may be extolled to the skies—and himself ranked among the benefactors of his people: but yet a little while, and it is seen that the miracle has not been wrought, the evil spirit has not been exorcised; the plague-spot is still on the bosom of his unhealed country; and the physician sinks away unobserved among men who have not taken a degree.

Look, for example, at the fate of that once fashionable, for we can hardly call it popular, tale—"Scotland's Skaith, or the History of Will and Jean," with its Supplement, "The Waes o' War." Hector Macneil had taste and feeling—even genius—and will be remembered among Scottish poets.

"Robin Burns, in mony a ditty,
Loudly sings in whisky's praise;
Sweet his sang! the mair's the pity
E'er on it he wared sic lays.

O' a' the ills puir Caledonia
E'er yet pree'd, or e'er will taste,
Brew'd in hell's black Pandemonia,
Whisky's ill will skaith her maist."

So said Hector Macneil of Robert Burns, in verse not quite

so vigorous as the "Earnest Cry." It would require a deeper voice to frighten the "drouthy" from "Scotch Drink," if it be "brewed in hell." "Impressed with the baneful consequences inseparable from an inordinate use of ardent spirits among the lower orders of society, and anxious to contribute something that might at least tend to retard the contagion of so dangerous an evil, it was conceived, in the ardour of philanthropy, that a natural, pathetic story, in verse, calculated to enfore moral truths, in the language of simplicity and passion, might probably interest the uncorrupted; and that a striking picture of the calamities incident to idle debauchery, contrasted with the blessings of industrious prosperity, might (although insufficient to reclaim abandoned vice) do something to strengthen and encourage endangered virtue. Visionary as these fond expectations may have been, it is pleasing to cherish the idea; and if we may be allowed to draw favourable inferences from the sale *of ten thousand copies in the short space of five months*, why should we despair of success?" The success, if we may trust to statistical tables, has, alas! been small; nor would it have been greater had a million copies been put into circulation. For the argument illustrated in the "History of Will and Jean" has no foundation in nature—and proceeds on an assumption grossly calumnious of the Scottish character. The following verses used once to ring in every ear :—

"Wha was ance like Willie Gairlace,
Wha in neiborin town or farm?
Beauty's bloom shone in his fair face,
Deadly strength was in his arm!

Wha wi' Will could rin or wrastle,
Throw the sledge or toss the bar?
Hap what would, he stood a castle,
Or for safety or for war.

Warm his heart, and mild as manfu',
Wi' the bauld he bauld wad be;
But to friends wha had their handfu',
Purse and service aye were free."

He marries Jeanie Miller, a wife worthy of him, and for three years they are good and happy in the blessing of God.

What in a few months makes drunkards of them both? He happens to go *once* for refreshment, after a long walk, into a wayside public-house—and from that night he is a lost man. He is described as entering it on his way home from a Fair—and we never heard of a Fair where there was no whisky—drinks Meg's ale or porter, and eats her bread and cheese without incurring much blame from his biographer; but his companion prevails on him to taste "the widow's gill"—a thing this bold peasant seems never before to have heard of—and infatuated with the novel potion, Willie Gairlace, after a few feeble struggles, in which he derives no support from his previous life of happiness, industry, sobriety, virtue, and religion, staggers to destruction. Jeanie, in despair, takes to drinking too; they are "rouped out;" she becomes a beggar, and he "a sodger." The verses run smoothly and rapidly, and there is both skill and power of narration, nor are touches of nature wanting, strokes of pathos that have drawn tears. But by what insidious witchcraft this frightful and fatal transformation was brought about, the uninspired story-teller gives no intimation — a few vulgar commonplaces constitute the whole of his philosophy — and he no more thinks of tracing the effects of whisky on the moral being—the heart—of poor Willie Gairlace, than he would have thought of giving an account of the coats of his stomach, had he been poisoned to death by arsenic. "His hero" is not gradually changed into a beast, like the victims of Circe's enchantments; but rather resembles the Cyclops all at once maddened in his cave by the craft of Ulysses. This is an outrage against nature; not thus is the sting to be taken out of "Scotland's Skaith," and a nation of drunkards to be changed into a nation of gentlemen. If no man be for a moment safe who "prees the widow's gill," the case is hopeless, and despair admits the inutility of Excise. In the "Waes o' War"—the Sequel of the story—Willie returns to Scotland with a pension and a wooden leg, and finds Jeanie with the children in a cottage given her by "the good Buccleuch." Both have become as sober as church-mice. The loss of a limb, and eight pounds a-year for life, had effectually reformed the husband, a cottage and one pound a-quarter the wife; and *this* was good Hector Macneil's idea of a Moral Poem! A poem that was not absolutely to stay the plague, but to fortify the constitution

against it; "and if we may be allowed to draw favourable inferences from the sale of ten thousand copies in the short space of five months, why should we despair of success?"

It is not from such poetry that any healthful influence can be exhaled over the vitiated habits of a people;—

> "With other ministrations, thou, O Nature!
> Healest thy wandering and distempered child."

Had Burns written a Tale to exemplify a Curse, Nature would have told him of them all; nor would he have been in aught unfitted by the experiences that prompted many a genial and festive strain, but, on the contrary, the better qualified to give in "thoughts that breathe and words that burn" some solution of that appalling mystery, in which the souls of good men are often seen hurrying and hurried along paths they had long abhorred, and still abhor, as may be seen from their eyes, even when they are rejecting all offered means of salvation, human and divine, and have sold their bibles to buy death. Nor would Burns have adopted the vulgar libel on the British army, that it was a receptacle for drunken husbands who had deserted their wives and children. There have been many such recruits; but his martial, loyal, and patriotic spirit would ill have brooked the thought of such a disgrace to the service, in an ideal picture, which his genius was at liberty to colour at its own will, and could have coloured brightly according to truth. "One fine summer evening he was at the Inn at Brownhill with a couple of friends, when a poor wayworn soldier passed the window: of a sudden, it struck the poet to call him in, and get the story of his adventures; after listening to which, he all at once fell into one of those fits of abstraction, not unusual with him," and perhaps, with the air of "*The mill, mill O*" in his heart, he composed "The Soldier's Return." It, too, speaks of the "waes of war;" and that poor wayworn soldier, we can well believe, had given no very flattering account of himself or his life, either before or after he had mounted the cockade. Why had he left Scotland and Mill-Mannoch on the sweet banks of the Coyle near Coylton Kirk? Burns cared not why; he loved his kind, and above all, his own people; and his imagination immediately pictured a blissful meeting of long-parted lovers:—

"I left the lines and tented field,
Where lang I'd been a lodger,
My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
A puir but honest sodger.

A right leal heart was in my breast,
A hand unstain'd wi' plunder;
And for fair Scotia, hame again,
I cheery on did wander.
I thought upon the banks o' Coil,
I thought upon my Nancy,
I thought upon the witching smile
That caught my youthful fancy.

At length I reach'd the bonny glen
Where early life I sported;
I passed the mill, and trysting thorn,
Where Nancy aft I courted:
Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
Down by her mother's dwelling!
And turn'd me round to hide the flood
That in my een was swelling."

The ballad is a very beautiful one, and throughout how true to nature! It is alive all over Scotland; that other is dead, or with suspended animation; not because "The Soldier's Return" is a happy, and "Will and Jean" a miserable story; for the people's heart is prone to pity, though their eyes are not much given to tears. But the people were told that "Will and Jean" had been written for their sakes, by a wise man made melancholy by the sight of their condition. The upper ranks were sorrowful exceedingly for the lower—all weeping over their wine for them over their whisky, and would not be comforted! For Hector Macneil informs them that

"Maggie's club, wha could get nae light
On some things that should be clear,
Fand ere lang the faut, and ae night
Clubb'd and gat the Gazetteer."

The lower ranks read the Lamentation, for ever so many thousands were thrust into their hands; but, though not insensible of their own infirmities, and willing to confess them, they rose up in indignation against a charge that swept their firesides of all that was most sacredly cherished

there, asked who wrote "The Cottar's Saturday Night?" and declared with one voice, and a loud one, that if they were to be bettered by poems, it should be by the poems of their own Robert Burns.

And here we are brought to speak of these Satirical compositions which made Burns famous within the bounds of more than one Presbytery, before the world had heard his name. In boyhood and early youth he showed no symptoms of humour—he was no droll—dull even—from constitutional headaches, and heartquakes, and mysteries not to be understood—no laughing face had he—the lovers of mirth saw none of its sparkles in his dark melancholy-looking eyes. In his autobiographical sketch he tells us of no funny or facetious "chap-books;" his earliest reading was of the "tender and the true," the serious or the sublime. But from the first he had been just as susceptible and as observant of the comic as of the tragic—nature had given him a genius as powerful over smiles as tears—but as the sacred source lies deepest, its first inspirations were drawn thence in abstraction and silence, and not till it felt some assurance of its diviner strength did it delight to disport itself among the ludicrous images that, in innumerable varieties of form and colour—all representative of realities—may be seen, when we choose to look at them, mingling with the most solemn or pathetic shows that pass along in our dream of life. You remember his words, "Thus with me began Love and Poetry." True, they grew together; but for a long time they were almost silent—seldom broke out into song. His earliest love verses but poorly express his love—nature was then too strong within him for art, which then was weak; and young passion, then pure but all-engrossing, was filling his whole soul with poetry that ere long was to find a tongue that would charm the world.

It was in the Humorous, the Comic, the Satirical, that he first tried and proved his strength. Exulting to find that a rush of words was ready at his will—that no sooner flashed his fancies than on the instant they were embodied, he wantoned and revelled among the subjects that had always seemed to him the most risible, whatever might be the kind of laughter, simple or compound — pure mirth, or a mixture of mirth and contempt, even of indignation and scorn—mirth still being the chief ingredient

that qualified the whole—and these, as you know, were all included within the "Sanctimonious," from which Burns believed the Sacred to be excluded; but there lay the danger, and there the blame, if he transgressed the holy bounds.

His satires were unsparingly directed against certain ministers of the gospel, whose Calvinism he thought was not Christianity; whose characters were to him odious, their persons ridiculous, their manners in the pulpit irreverent, and out of it absurd; and having frequent opportunities of seeing and hearing them in all their glory, he made studies of them *con amore* on the spot, and at home from abundant materials with a master's hand elaborated finished pictures—for some of them are no less—which, when hung out for public inspection in market-places, brought the originals before crowds of gazers transported into applause. Was this wicked? Wicked we think too strong a word; but we cannot say that it was not reprehensible, for to all sweeping satire there must be some exception—and exaggeration cannot be truth. Burns by his irregularities had incurred ecclesiastical censure, and it has not unfairly been said that personsal spite barbed the sting of his satire. Yet we fear such censure had been but too lightly regarded by him; and we are disposed to think that his ridicule, however blamable on other grounds, was free from malignity, and that his genius for the comic rioted in the pleasure of sympathy and the pride of power. To those who regard the persons he thus satirised as truly belonging to the old Covenanters, and Saints of a more ancient time, such satires must seem shameful and sinful; to us who regard "Rumble John" and his brethren in no such light, they appear venial offences, and not so horrible as Hudibrastic. A good many years after Burns's death, in our boyhood, we sometimes saw and heard more than one of those worthies, and cannot think his descriptions greatly overcharged. We remember walking one day—unknown to us a fast-day—in the neighbourhood of an ancient fortress, and hearing a noise to be likened to nothing imaginable on this earth but the bellowing of a buffalo fallen into a trap upon a tiger, which as we came within half a mile of the castle we discerned to be the voice of a pastor engaged in public prayer. His physiognomy was little less alarming than his voice, and his sermon

corresponded with his looks and his lungs—the whole being indeed an extraordinary exhibition of divine worship. We never can think it sinful that Burns should have been humorous on such a pulpiteer; and if we shudder at some of the verses in which he seems yet alive, it is not at the satirist.

"From this time, I began to be known in the country as a maker of rhymes. 'Holy Willie's Prayer' next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much that they held several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery, and see if any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers;" "and to a place among *profane rhymers*," says Mr Lockhart, in his masterly volume, "the author of this *terrible infliction* had unquestionably established his right." Sir Walter speaks of it as "a piece of satire *more exquisitely severe* than any which Burns ever afterwards wrote, *but unfortunately cast in a form too daringly profane* to be received into Dr Currie's collection." We have no wish to say one word in opposition to the sentence pronounced by such judges; but has Burns here *dared* beyond Milton, Goethe, and Byron? He puts a Prayer to the Almighty into the mouth of one whom he believes to be one of the lowest of blasphemers. In that Prayer are impious supplications couched in shocking terms characteristic of the hypocrite who stands on a familiar footing with his Maker. Milton's blasphemer is a fallen angel, Goethe's a devil, Byron's the first murderer, and Burns's an elder of the Kirk. All the four poets are alike guilty, or not guilty—unless there be in the case of one of them something peculiar that lifts him up above the rest, in the case of another something peculiar that leaves him alone a sinner. Let Milton then stand aloof, acquitted of the charge, not because of the grandeur and magnificence of his conception of Satan, but because its high significance cannot be misunderstood by the pious, and that out of the mouths of the dwellers in darkness, as well as of the Sons of the Morning, "he vindicates the ways of God to man." Byron's Cain blasphemes; does Byron? Many have thought so—for they saw, or seemed to see, in the character of the Cursed, as it glooms in soliloquies that are poetically sublime, some dark intention in its delineator to inspire doubts of the justice of the Almighty One who inhabiteth eternity. Goethe in the "Prologue in Heaven" brings Mephistopheles face to face

with God. But Goethe devoted many years to "his great poem, Faust," and in it he too, as many of the wise and good believe, strove to show rising out of the blackness of darkness the attributes of Him whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity. Be it even so; then, why blame Burns? You cannot justly do so, on account of the "daringly profane form" in which "Holy Willie's Prayer" is cast, without utterly reprobating the "Prologue in Heaven."

Of "The Holy Fair" few have spoken with any very serious reprehension. Dr Blair was so much taken with it that he suggested a well-known emendation; and for our own part we have no hesitation in saying, that we see no reason to lament that it should have been written by the writer of "The Cottar's Saturday Night." The title of the poem was no profane thought of his—it had arisen long before among the people themselves, and expressed the prevalent opinion respecting the use and wont that profaned the solemnisation of the most awful of all religious rites. In many places, and in none more than in Mauchline, the administration of the Sacrament was hedged round about by the self-same practices that mark the character and make the enjoyment of a Rural Fair-day. Nobody doubts that in the midst of them all sat hundreds of pious people whose whole hearts and souls were in the divine service. Nobody doubts that even among those who took part in the open or hardly concealed indecencies which custom could never make harmless, though it made many insensible to their grossness, not a few were now and then visited with devout thoughts; nay, that some, in spite of their improprieties, which fell off from them unawares, or were by an act of pious volition dismissed, were privileged to partake of the communion elements. Nobody supposes that the heart of such an assemblage was to be judged from its outside—that there was no composed depth beneath that restless surface. But everybody knows that there was fatal desecration of the spirit that should have *reigned* there, and that the thoughts of this world were paramount at a time and place set apart, under sanctions and denunciations the most awful, to the remembrance of Him who purchased for us the kingdom of Heaven.

We believe, then, that Burns was not guilty in this poem of any intentional irreverence toward the public ordinances of

religion. It does not, in our opinion, afford any reason for supposing that he was among the number of those who regard such ordinances as of little or no avail, because they do not always exemplify the reverence which becomes men in the act of communing with their God. Such is the constitution of human nature that there are too many moments in the very article of these solemn occasions when the hearts of men are a prey to all their wonted cares and follies; and this shortcoming in the whole solemnity robs it to many a delicate and well-disposed, but not thoroughly instructed imagination, of all attraction. But there must be a worship by communities as well as by individuals; for in the regards of Providence, communities appear to have a personality as well as individuals; and how shall the worship of communities be conducted, but by forms and ceremonies, which, as they occur at stated times, whatever be the present frame of men's minds, must be often gone through with coldness. If those persons would duly consider the necessity of such ordinances, and their use in the conservation of religion, they would hold them sacred, in spite of the levity and hypocrisy that too often accompany their observance, nor would they wonder to see among the worshippers an unsuspected attention to the things of this world. But there was far more than this in the desecration which called for "The Holy Fair" from Burns. A divine ordinance had through unhallowed custom been overlaid by abuses, if not to the extinction, assuredly to the suppression, in numerous communicants, of the religious spirit essential to its efficacy; and in that fact we have to look for a defence of the audacity of his sarcasm; we are to believe that the Poet felt strong in the possession of a reverence far greater than that which he beheld, and in the conviction that nothing which he treated with levity could be otherwise than displeasing in the eye of God. We are far from seeking to place him, on this occasion, by the side of those men who, "strong in hatred of idolatry," became religious reformers, and while purifying Faith, unsparingly shattered Forms, not without violence to the cherished emotions of many pious hearts. Yet their wit, too, was often aimed at faulty things standing in close connection with solemnities which wit cannot approach without danger. Could such scenes as those against which Burns directed the battery of his ridicule be

endured now? Would they not be felt to be most *profane?* And may we not attribute the change in some measure to the Comic Muse?

Burns did not need to have subjects for poetry pointed out and enumerated to him, latent or patent in Scottish Life, as was considerately done in a series of dullish verses by that excellent person, Mr Telford, Civil Engineer. Why, it has been asked, did he not compose a Sacred Poem on the administration of the Sacrament of our Lord's Last Supper? The answer is—how could he with such scenes before his eyes? Was he to shut them, and to describe it as if such scenes were not? Was he to introduce them, and give us a poem of a mixed kind, faithful to the truth? From such profanation his genius was guarded by his sense of religion, which though defective was fervent, and not unaccompanied with awe. Observe, in what he has written, how he keeps aloof from the Communion Table. Not for one moment does he in thought enter the doors of the House of God. There is a total separation between the outer scene and the inner sanctuary—the administration of the sacrament is removed out of all those desecrating circumstances, and left to the imagination of the religious mind—by his silence. Would a great painter have dared to give us a picture of it? Harvey has painted, simply and sublimely, a "Hill Sacrament." But there all is solemn in the light of expiring day; the peace that passeth all understanding reposes on the heads of all the communicants; and in a spot sheltered from the persecutor by the solitude of sympathising nature, the humble and the contrite, in a ritual hallowed by their pious forefathers, draw near at his bidding to their Redeemer.

We must now return to Burns himself, but cannot allow him to leave Ellisland without dwelling for a little while longer on the happy life he led for three years and more on that pleasant farm. Now and then you hear him low-spirited in his letters, but generally cheerful; and though his affairs were not very prosperous, there was comfort in his household. There was peace and plenty; for Mrs Burns was a good manager, and he was not a bad one; and one way and another the family enjoyed an honest livelihood. The house had been decently furnished, the farm well-stocked; and they wanted nothing to satisfy their sober wishes. Three

years after marriage, Burns, with his Jean at his side, writes to Mrs Dunlop, "As fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever; rustic, native grace; unaffected modesty, and unsullied purity; nature's mother-wit, and the rudiments of taste; a simplicity of soul, unsuspicious of, because unacquainted with, the ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world; and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition, and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part, and ardently glowing with a more than equal return: these, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution, which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life." Josiah Walker, however, writing many years after, expresses his belief that Burns did not love his wife.

A discerning reader will perceive (says he) that the letters in which he announces his marriage are written in that state, when the mind is pained by reflecting on an unwelcome step; and finds relief to itself in seeking arguments to justify the deed, and lessen its disadvantages in the opinion of others. But the greater the change which the taste of Burns had undergone, and the more his hopes of pleasure must in consequence have been diminished, from rendering Miss Armour his only female companion, the more credit does he deserve for that rectitude of resolution, which prompted him to fulfil what he considered as an engagement, and to act as a necessary duty prescribed. We may be at the same time permitted to lament the necessity which he had thus incurred. A marriage, from a sentiment of duty, may by circumstances be rendered indispensable; but as it is undeniably a duty, not to be accomplished by any temporary exertion, however great, but calling for a renewal of effort every year, every day, and every hour, it is putting the strength and constancy of our principles to the most severe and hazardous trial. Had Burns completed his marriage, before perceiving the interest which he had the power of creating in females, whose accomplishments of mind and manners Jean could never hope to equal—or had his duty and his pride permitted his alliance with one of that superior class—many of his subsequent deviations from sobriety and happiness might probably have been prevented. It was no fault of Mrs Burns that she was unable, from her education, to furnish what had grown, since the period of their first acquaintance, one of the poet's most exquisite enjoyments; and if a daily vacuity of interest at home exhausted his patience, and led him abroad in quest of exercise for the activity of his mind, those who can place themselves in a similar situation will not be inclined to judge too severely of his error.

Mrs Burns, you know, was alive when this philosophical stuff was published, and she lived for more than twenty years after it, as exemplary a widow as she had been a wife. Its gross indelicacy—say rather wanton insult—to all the feelings of a woman, is abhorrent to all the feelings of a man, and shows the monk. And we have quoted it now that you may see what vile liberties respectable libellers were long wont to take with Burns and all that belonged to him—because he was a Gauger. Who would have dared to write thus of the wife and widow of a—*Gentleman*—of one who was a *Lady?* Not Josiah Walker. Yet it passed for years unreproved: the "Life" which contains it still circulates, and seems to be in some repute; and Josiah Walker on another occasion is cited to the rescue by George Thomson as a champion and vindicator of the truth. The insolent eulogist dared to say that Robert Burns in marrying Jean Armour "repaired seduction by the most precious sacrifice, short of life, which one human being can make to another!" To her, in express terms, he attributes her husband's misfortunes and misdoings—to her who soothed his sorrows, forgave his sins, inspired his songs, cheered his hearth, blest his bed, educated his children, revered his memory, and held sacred his dust.

What do you think was, according to this biographer, the chief cause of the blamable life Burns led at Ellisland? *He knew not what to do with himself!* "When not occupied in the fields, *his time must have hung heavy on his hands!*" Just picture to yourself Burns peevishly pacing the "half-parlour half-kitchen" floor, with his hands in his breeches pockets, tormenting his dull brain to invent some employment by which he might be enabled to resist the temptation of going to bed in the forenoon in his clothes! But how is this? "When not occupied in the fields, his time must have hung heavy on his hands; *for we are not to infer*, from the literary eminence of Burns, that, like a person regularly trained to studious habits, he could render himself by study independent of society. *He could read and write* when occasion prompted; but he could not, like a professional scholar, become so interested *in a daily course of lettered industry, as to find company an interruption rather than a relief.*" We cheerfully admit that Burns was not engaged at Ellisland on a History of the World. He had not sufficient books. Besides, he had to

ride, in good smuggling weather, two hundred miles a-week. But we cannot admit that "to banish dejection, *and to fill his vacant hours*, it is not surprising that he should have resorted to such associates as his new neighbourhood, or the inns upon the road to Ayrshire, could afford; and if these happened to be of a low description, that his constant ambition to render himself an important and interesting figure in every society, made him suit his conduct and conversation to their taste." When not on duty, the Exciseman was to be found at home like other farmers, and when not "occupied in the fields" with farm work, he might be seen playing with Sir William Wallace and other Scottish heroes in miniature, two or three pet sheep of the quadruped breed sharing in the vagaries of the bipeds; or striding along the Scaur with his Whangee rod in his fist, with which, had time hung heavy, he would have cracked the skull of Old Chronos; or sitting on a divot-dyke with the ghost of Tam O' Shanter, Captain Henderson, and the Earl of Glencairn; or, so it is recorded, "on a rock projecting into the Nith (which we have looked for in vain), employed in angling, with a cap made of a fox's skin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous Highland broadsword;" or with his legs under the fir, with the famous Black Bowl sending up a Scotch mist in which were visible the wigs of two orthodox English clergymen, "to whose tastes his constant ambition to render himself an important and interesting figure in every society, made him suit his conduct and conversation;"—in such situations might Josiah Walker have stumbled upon Burns, and perhaps met with his own friend, "a clergyman from the south of England, who on his return talked with rapture of his reception, and of all that he had seen and heard in the cottage of Ellisland," or with Ramsay of Oughtertyre, who was so delighted "with Burns's *uxor Sabina qualis* and the poet's modest mansion, so unlike the habitations of ordinary rustics," the very evening the Bard suddenly bounced in upon us, and said as he entered, "I come, to use the words of Shakespeare, '*stewed in haste*,'" and in a little while, such was the force and versatility of his genius, he made the tears run down Mr L——'s cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain;"—or who knows but the pedestrian might have found the poet engaged in religious exercises under the sylvan shade? For did he not write to Mrs Dun-

lop, "I own myself so little of a presbyterian, that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, for breaking in on that habitual routine of life and thought which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery. This day (New-Year-day morning), the first Sunday of May, a breezy blue-skyed noon, some time before the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end of autumn;—these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holiday." Finally, Josiah might have made his salaam to the Exciseman just as he was folding up that letter in which he says,—

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices or whims, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing or struck with that, which, in minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain daisy, the harebell, the foxglove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plovers in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can all this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature—and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave.

Burns, however, found that an active gauger, with ten parishes to look after, could not be a successful farmer; and looking forward to promotion in the Excise, he gave up his lease, and on his appointment to another district removed into Dumfries. The greater part of his small capital had been sunk or scattered on the somewhat stony soil of Ellisland; but with his library and furniture—his wife and his children—his and their wearing apparel—a trifle in ready money—no debt—youth, health, and hope, and a salary of seventy pounds, he did not think himself poor. Such provision, he said, was luxury to what either he or his better-half had been born to—

and the Flitting from Ellisland, accompanied as it was with the regrets and respect of the neighbourhood, displayed on the whole a cheerful cavalcade.

It is remarked by Mr Lockhart that Burns's "four principal biographers, Heron, Currie, Walker, and Irving, concur in the general statement that his moral course, from the time that he settled in Dumfries, was downwards." Mr Lockhart has shown that they have one and all committed many serious errors in this "general statement," and we too shall examine it before we conclude. Meanwhile let us direct our attention, not to his "moral course," but to the course of his genius. It continued to burn bright as ever, and if the character of the man corresponded in its main features with that of the poet, which we believe it did, its best vindication will be found in a right understanding of the spirit that animated his genius to the last, and gave birth to perhaps its finest effusions—HIS MATCHLESS SONGS.

In his earliest Journal, we find this beautiful passage:—

> There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand: and it has often given me many a heartache to reflect, that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (O how mortifying to a bard's vanity!) are now "buried among the wreck of things which were." O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well; the last, the meanest of the Muse's train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard, unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love; he too has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his muse: She taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf lie lightly on your bones! and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love.

The old nameless Song-writers, buried centuries ago in kirk-yards that have themselves perhaps ceased to exist—yet

one sees sometimes lonesome burial-places among the hills, where man's dust continues to be deposited after the house of God has been removed elsewhere—the old nameless Song-writers took hold out of their stored hearts of some single thought or remembrance surpassingly sweet at the moment over all others, and instantly words as sweet had being, and breathed themselves forth along with some accordant melody of the still more olden time;—or when musical and poetical genius happily met together, both alike passion-inspired, then was born another new tune or air soon treasured within a thousand maidens' hearts, and soon flowing from lips that "murmured near the living brooks a music sweeter than their own." Had boy or virgin faded away in untimely death, and the green mound that covered them, by the working of some secret power far within the heart, suddenly risen to fancy's eye, and then as suddenly sunk away into oblivion with all the wavering burial-place? Then was framed dirge, hymn, elegy, that, long after the mourned and the mourner were forgotten, continued to wail and lament up and down all the vales of Scotland—for what vale is unvisited by such sorrow?—in one same monotonous melancholy air, varied only as each separate singer had her heart touched, and her face saddened, with a fainter or stronger shade of pity or grief!—Had some great battle been lost and won, and to the shepherd on the braes had a faint and far-off sound seemed on a sudden to touch the horizon like the echo of a trumpet? Then had some ballad its birth, heroic yet with dying falls, for the singer wept, even as his heart burned within him, over the princely head prostrated with all its plumes, haply near the lowly woodsman, whose horn had often startled the deer as together they trode the forest-chase, lying humble in death by his young lord's feet!—O, blue-eyed maiden, even more beloved than beautiful! how couldst thou ever find heart to desert thy minstrel, who for thy sake would have died without one sigh given to the disappearing happiness of sky and earth—and, witched by some evil spell, how couldst thou follow an outlaw to foreign lands, to find, alas! some day a burial in the great deep? Thus was enchained in sounds the complaint of disappointed, defrauded, and despairing passion, and another air filled the eyes of our Scottish maidens with a

new luxury of tears—a low flat tune, surcharged throughout with one groan-like sigh, and acknowledged, even by the gayest heart, to be indeed the language of an incurable grief! —Or flashed the lover's raptured hour across the brain—yet an hour, in all its rapture, calm as the summer sea—or the level summit of a far flushing forest asleep in sunshine, when there is not a breath in heaven? Then thoughts that breathe, and words that burn—and, in that wedded verse and music you feel that "love is heaven, and heaven is love!"—But affection, sober, sedate, and solemn, has its sudden and strong inspirations; sudden and strong as those of the wildest and most fiery passion. Hence the old grey-haired poet and musician, sitting haply blind in shade or sunshine, and bethinking him of the days of his youth, while the leading hand of his aged Alice gently touches his arm, and that voice of hers that once lilted like the linnet, is now like that of the dove in its lonely tree, mourns not for the past, but gladdens in the present, and sings a holy song—like one of the songs of Zion; for both trust that, ere the sun brings another summer, their feet will be wandering by the waters of eternal life.

Thus haply might arise verse and air of Scotland's old pathetic melodies. And how her light and airy measures?

Streaks of sunshine come dancing down from heaven on the darkest days, to bless and beautify the life of poverty dwelling in the wilderness. Labour, as he goes forth at morn from his rustic lodge, feels, to the small bird's twitter, his whole being filled with joy; and, as he quickens his pace to field or wood, breaks into a song. Care is not always his black companion, but oft, at evening hour—while innocence lingers half-afraid behind, yet still follows with thoughtful footsteps—Mirth leads him to the circular seat beneath the tree, among whose exterior branches swings, creaking to and fro in the wind, the sign-board teaching friendship by the close grasp of two emblematical hands. And thence the catch and troll, while "laughter holding both its sides," sheds tears to song and ballad pathetic on the woes of married life, and all the ills that "our flesh is heir to." Fair, Rocking, and Harvest-home, and a hundred rural festivals, are for ever giving wings to the flight of the circling year; or how could this lazy earth ever in so short a time whirl, spinning asleep on her axis, round

that most attractive but distant sun? How loud, broad, deep, soul-and-body-shaking is the ploughman's or the shepherd's mirth, as a hundred bold sun-burnt visages make the rafters of the old hostel ring! Overhead the thunder of the time-keeping dance, and all the joyous tenement alive with love! The pathetic song, by genius steeped in tears, is forgotten; roars of boorish laughter reward the fearless singer for the ballad that brings burning blushes on every female face, till the snooded head can scarcely be lifted up again to meet the free kiss of affection bold in the privileges of the festival, where bashfulness is out of season, and the chariest maid withholds not the harmless boon only half granted beneath the milk-white thorn. It seems as if all the profounder interests of life were destroyed, or had never existed. In moods like these, genius plays with grief, and sports with sorrow. Broad farce shakes hands with deep tragedy. Vice seems almost to be virtue's sister. The names and the natures of things are changed, and all that is most holy, and most holily cherished by us strange mortal creatures—for which thousands of men and women have died at the stake, and would die again rather than forfeit it—virgin love, and nuptial faith, and religion itself that saves us from being but as the beasts that perish, and equalises us with the angels that live for ever—all become for a time seeming objects of scoff, derision, and merriment. But it is not so,—as God is in heaven it is not so; there has been a flutter of strange dancing lights on life's surface, but that is all; its depths have remained undisturbed in the poor man's nature; and how deep these are you may easily know by looking, in an hour or two, through that small shining pane, the only one in the hut, and beholding and hearing him, his wife and children, on their knees in prayer —(how beautiful in devotion that same maiden now!) not unseen by the eye of Him who sitting in the heaven of heavens doth make our earth his footstool!

And thus the many broad-mirth-songs, and tales, and ballads arose, that enliven Scotland's antique minstrelsy.

To Burns's ear all these lowly lays were familiar, and most dear were they all to his heart: nor less so the airs in which they have as it were been so long embalmed, and will be imperishable, unless some fatal change should ever be wrought in the manners of our people. From the first hour, and indeed

long before it, that he composed his rudest verse, often had he sung aloud "old songs that are the music of the heart;" and some day or other to be able himself to breathe such strains, had been his dearest, his highest ambition. His "genius and his moral frame" were thus imbued with the spirit of our old traditionary ballad poetry; and as soon as all his manifold passions were ripe, and his whole glorious being in full maturity, the voice of song was on all occasions of deepest and tenderest human interest, the voice of his daily, his nightly speech. He wooed each maiden in song that will, as long as our Doric dialect is breathed by love in beauty's ears, be murmured close to the cheek of Innocence trembling in the arms of Passion. It was in some such dream of delight that, wandering all by himself to seek the muse by some "trotting burn's meander," he found his face breathed upon by the wind, as it was turned toward the region of the setting sun; and in a moment it was as the pure breath of his beloved, and he exclaimed to the conscious stars,—

"Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west;
For there the bonny lassie lives,
The lassie I loe best!"

How different, yet how congenial to that other strain, which ends like the last sound of a funeral bell, when the aged have been buried,—

"We'll sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo!"

These old songs were his models, because they were models of certain forms of feeling having a necessary and eternal existence. Feel as those who breathed them felt, and if you utter your feelings, the utterance is song. Burns did feel as they felt, and looked with the same eyes on the same objects. So entirely was their language his language, that all the beautiful lines, and half lines, and single words, that, because of something in them more exquisitely true to nature, had survived all the rest of the compositions to which they had long ago belonged, were sometimes adopted by him, almost unconsciously it might seem, in his finest inspirations; and oftener still sounded in his ear like a key-note, on which he pitched his own plaintive tune of the heart, till the voice and

language of the old and new days were but as one; and the maiden who sung to herself the song by her wheel, or on the brae, quite lost in a wavering world of phantasy, could not, as she smiled, choose but also weep!

So far from detracting from the originality of his lyrics, this impulse to composition greatly increased it, while it gave to them a more touching character than perhaps ever could have belonged to them, had they not breathed at all of antiquity. Old but not obsolete, a word familiar to the lips of human beings who lived ages ago, but tinged with a slight shade of strangeness as it flows from our own, connects the speaker, or the singer, in a way, though "mournful, yet pleasant to the soul," with past generations, and awakens a love at once more tender and more imaginative towards "auld Scotland." We think, even at times when thus excited, of other Burnses who died without their fame; and, glorying in him and his name, we love his poetry the more deeply for the sake of him whose genius has given our native land a new title of honour among the nations. Assuredly Burns is felt to be a Scotchman *intus et in cute* in all his poetry; but not more even in his "Tam o' Shanter" and "Cottar's Saturday Night," his two longest and most elaborate compositions, than in one and all of his innumerable and inimitable songs, from "Dainty Davie" to "Thou lingering star." We know, too, that the composition of songs was to him a perfect happiness that continued to the close of life—an inspiration that shot its light and heat, it may be said, within the very borders of his grave.

In his "Commonplace or Scrap Book, begun in April 1783," there are many fine reflections on Song-writing, besides that exquisite Invocation—showing how early Burns had *studied* it as an art. We have often heard some of his most popular songs found fault with for their imperfect rhymes—so imperfect, indeed, as not to be called rhymes at all; and we acknowledge that we remember the time when we used reluctantly to yield a dissatisfied assent to such objections. Thus in "Highland Mary"—an impassioned strain of eight quatrains—strictly speaking there are no rhymes—*Montgomery, drumlie; tarry, Mary; blossom, bosom; dearie, Mary; tender, asunder; early, Mary; fondly, kindly; dearly, Mary.* It is not enough to say that here, and in other instances,

Burns was imitating the manner of some of the old songs—indulging in the same license; for he would not have done so had he thought it an imperfection. He felt that there must be a reason in nature why this was sometimes so pleasing—why it sometimes gave a grace beyond the reach of art. Those minnesingers had all musical ears, and were right in believing them. Their ears told them that such words as these—meeting on their tympana under the modifying influence of tune, were virtually rhymes; and as such they "slid into their souls."

There is (says Burns in a passage unaccountably omitted by Currie, and first given by Cromek), a great irregularity in the old Scotch songs—a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires—but which glides in most melodiously with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of "The mill mill O"—to give it a plain prosaic reading—it halts prodigiously out of measure. On the other hand, the song set to the same tune in Bremner's Collection of Scotch songs, which begins—"To Fanny fair could I impart," &c.—it is most exact measure; and yet, let them both be sung before a real critic, one above the biases of prejudice, but a thorough judge of nature, how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite and lamely methodical, compared with the wild, warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first. This is particularly the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers—the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, and yet very frequently nothing—not even *like* rhyme—or sameness of jingle, at the end of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that perhaps it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs—particularly the class of them mentioned above—independent of rhyme altogether.

It is a common mistake to suppose that the world is indebted for most of Burns's songs to George Thomson. He contributed to that gentleman sixty original songs, and a noble contribution it was; besides hints, suggestions, emendations, and restorations innumerable; but three times as many were written by him, emended or restored, for Johnson's Scots' Musical Museum. He began to send songs to Johnson, with whom he had become intimately acquainted on his

first visit to Edinburgh, early in 1787, and continued to send them till within a few days of his death. In November 1788 he says to Johnson, "I can easily see, my dear friend, that you will probably have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account lucratively in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country, and I am certain posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Be not in a hurry; let us go on correctly, and your name will be immortal." On the 4th of July 1796—he died on the 21st—he writes from Dumfries to the worthy music-seller in Edinburgh :—

How are you, my dear friend, and how comes on your fifth volume? You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but alas! the hand of pain, sorrow, and care, has these many months lain heavy on me. Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural muse of Scotia. You are a good, worthy, honest fellow, and have a good right to live in this world—because you deserve it. Many a merry meeting the publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow, consuming illness which hangs over me will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well reached his middle career, and will turn over the poet to far more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit, or the pathos of sentiment. However, *hope* is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it as well as I can. Let me hear from you as soon as convenient. Your work is a great one, and now that it is finished, I see, if I were to begin again, two or three things that might be mended; yet I will venture to prophesy, that to future ages your publication will be the text-book and standard of Scottish song and music. I am ashamed to ask another favour of you, because you have been so very good already; but my wife has a very particular friend of hers—a young lady who sings well—to whom she wishes to present the *Scots' Musical Museum*. If you have a spare copy, will you be so obliging as to send it by the very first *Fly*, as I am anxious to have it soon.

Turn from James Johnson and his *Scots' Musical Museum* for a moment to George Thomson and his Collection. In September 1792, Mr Thomson—who never personally knew Burns—tells him, "For some years past I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in selecting and collating the most favourite of our national melodies for publica-

tion;" and says—"We will esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour; besides *paying any reasonable price* you shall please to demand for it." Burns, spurning the thought of being "paid any reasonable price," closes at once with the proposal, "As the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have—strained to the utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm." That enthusiasm for more than three years seldom languished—it was in his heart when his hand could hardly obey its bidding; and on the 12th of July 1796—eight days after he had written, in the terms you have just seen, to James Johnson for a copy of his *Scots' Musical Museum*—he writes thus to George Thomson for five pounds: "After all my boasted independence, stern necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel —— of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do for God's sake send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness; but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. *I do not ask all this gratuitously; for upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song genius you have seen.* FORGIVE ME, FORGIVE ME!"

Mr Johnson, no doubt, sent a copy of the *Museum;* but we do not know if the *Fly* arrived before the BIER. Mr Thomson was prompt: and Dr Currie, speaking of Burns's refusal to become a weekly contributor to the Poet's Corner in the *Morning Chronicle*, at a guinea a-week, says, "Yet he had for several years furnished, and was at that time furnishing, the *Museum* of Johnson, with his beautiful lyrics, without fee or reward, and was obstinately refusing all recompense for his assistance to the greater work of Mr Thomson, which the justice and generosity of that gentleman was pressing upon him." That obstinacy gave way at last, not under the pressure of Mr Thomson's generosity and justice, but under "the sense of his poverty, and of the approaching distress of his infant family, which pressed," says Dr Currie truly, "on Burns as he lay on the bed of death."

But we are anticipating; and desire at present to see Burns "in glory and in joy." "Whenever I want to be more

than ordinary *in song;* to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs, do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself on a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the admirability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus; and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon." We know the weak side of his character — the sin that most easily beset him — that did indeed "stain his name," and made him for many seasons the prey of remorse. But though it is not allowed to genius to redeem—though it is falsely said that "the light that leads astray is light from heaven"—and though Burns's transgressions must be judged as those of common men, and visited with the same moral reprobation—yet surely we may dismiss them with a sigh from our knowledge, for a while, as we feel the charm of the exquisite poetry originating in the inspiration of passion, purified by genius, and congenial with the utmost innocency of the virgin breast.

In his Love-Songs, all that is best in his own being delights to bring itself into communion with all that is best in theirs whom he visions walking before him in beauty. That beauty is made "still more beauteous" in the light of his genius, and the passion it then moves partakes of the same ethereal colour. If love inspired his poetry, poetry inspired his love, and not only inspired but elevated the whole nature of it. If the highest delights of his genius were in the conception and celebration of female loveliness, that trained sensibility was sure to produce extraordinary devotion to the ideal of that loveliness of which innocence is the very soul. If music refine the manners, how much more will it have that effect on him who studies its spirit, as Burns did that of the Scottish songs, in order to marry them to verse. "Until I am complete master of a tune in my own singing, such as it is, I can never compose for it. My way is this: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression —then choose my theme—compose one stanza. When that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the

business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature round me that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy and workings of my bosom, humming every now and then the air, with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way." Then we know that his Bonny Jean was generally in his presence, engaged in house affairs, while he was thus on his inspiring swing, that she was among the first to hear each new song recited by her husband, and the first to sing it to him, that he might know if it had been produced to live. He has said, that "musically speaking, conjugal love is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet"—that Love, not so confined, "has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul." But did not those "tones inexpressibly sweet" often mingle themselves unawares to the Poet with those "intellectual modulations?" And had he not once loved Jean Armour to distraction? His first experiences of the passion of love, in its utmost sweetness and bitterness, had been for her sake, and the memories of those years came often of themselves unbidden into the very heart of his songs when his fancy was for the hour enamoured of other beauties.

With a versatility not compatible, perhaps, with a capacity of profoundest emotion, but in his case with extreme tenderness, he could instantly assume, and often on the slightest apparent impulse, some imagined character as completely as if it were his own, and realise its conditions. Or he could imagine himself out of all the circumstances by which his individual life was environed, and to all the emotions arising from that transmigration, give utterance as lively as the language inspired by his communion with his own familiar world. Even when he knew he was dying, he looked in Jessie Lewars' face, whom he loved as a father loves his daughter, and that he might reward her filial tenderness for him who was fast wearing away, by an immortal song, in his

affection for her he feigned a hopeless passion, and imagined himself the victim of despair :—

"Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessie!
Although thou maun never be mine,
Although even hope is denied;
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in this world beside!"

It was said by one who during a long life kept saying weighty things—old Hobbes—that "in great differences of persons, the greater have often fallen in love with the meaner; but not contrary." What Gilbert tells us of his brother might seem to corroborate that dictum—"His love rarely settled on persons who were higher than himself, or who had more consequence in life." This, however, could only apply to the early part of his life. Then he had few opportunities of fixing his affections on persons above him; and if he had had, their first risings would have been suppressed by his pride. But his after destination so far levelled the inequality that it was not unnatural to address his devotion to ladies of high degree. He then felt that he could command their benevolence, if not inspire their love; and elated by that consciousness, he feared not to use towards them the language of love, of unbounded passion. He believed, and he was not deceived in the belief, that he could exalt them in their own esteem, by hanging round their proud necks the ornaments of his genius. Therefore, sometimes, he seemed to turn himself away disdainfully from sunburnt bosoms in homespun covering, to pay his vows and adorations to the Queens of Beauty. The devoirs of a poet, whose genius was at their service, have been acceptable to many a high-born dame and damsel, as the submission of a conqueror. Innate superiority made him, in these hours, absolutely unable to comprehend the spirit of society as produced by artificial distinctions, and at all times unwilling to submit to it or pay it homage. "Perfection whispered passing by, Behold the Lass o' Ballochmyle!" and Burns, too proud to change himself into a lord or squire, imagined what happiness might have been his if all those charms had budded and blown within a cottage like "a rose-tree full in bearing."

"Oh, had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Though shelter'd in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland's plain,
Through weary winter's wind and rain,
With joy, with rapture, I would toil;
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonny lass o' Ballochmyle."

He speaks less passionately of the charms of "bonny Lesley as she gaed owre the border," for they had not taken him by surprise; he was prepared to behold a queen, and with his own hands he placed upon her head the crown.

"To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever;
For Nature made her what she is,
And never made anither!

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee;
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore thee."

Nay, evil spirits look in her face and almost become good—while angels love her for her likeness to themselves, and happy she must be on earth in the eye of heaven. We know not much about the "Lovely Davis;" but in his stanzas she is the very Sovereign of Nature.

"Each eye it cheers, when she appears,
Like Phœbus in the morning,
When past the shower, and every flower
The garden is adorning.
As the wretch looks o'er Siberia's shore,
When winter-bound the wave is;
Sae droops our heart when we must part
Frae charming, lovely Davis.

Her smile's a gift frae 'boon the lift
That makes us mair than princes,
A sceptred hand, a king's command,
Is in her parting glances.
The man in arms 'gainst female charms,
Even he her willing slave is;
He hugs his chain, and owns the reign
Of conquering, lovely Davis."

The loveliest of one of the loveliest families in Scotland he changed into a lowly lassie, aye "working her mammie's work," and her lover into Young Robbie—"wha gaed wi' Jeanie to the tryst, and danced wi' Jeanie on the down." In imagination he is still himself the happy man—his loves are short and rapturous as his lyrics—and while his constancy may be complained of, it is impossible to help admiring the richness of his genius that keeps for ever bringing fresh tribute to her whom he happens to adore.

"Her voice is the voice of the morning,
That wakes through the green-spreading grove,
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
On music, and pleasure, and love."

That was the voice of one altogether lovely—a lady elegant and accomplished—and adorning a higher condition than his own; but though finer lines were never written, they are not finer than these four inspired by the passing-by of a young woman from the country, on the High Street of Dumfries, with her shoes and stockings in her hand, and her petticoats frugally yet liberally kilted to her knee.

"Her yellow hair, beyond compare,
Comes trinkling down her swan-white neck,
And her two eyes, like stars in skies,
Would keep a sinking ship frae wreck."

It may be thought that such poetry is too high for the people—the common people—"beyond the reaches of their souls;" but Burns knew better—and he knew that he who would be their poet must put forth all his powers. There is not a single thought, feeling, or image in all he ever wrote, that has not been comprehended in its full force by thousands and tens of thousands in the very humblest condition. They could not of themselves have conceived them—nor given utterance to anything resembling them to our ears. How dull of apprehension! how unlike gods! But let them be spoken to, and they hear. Their hearts, delighted with a strange sweet music which by recognition they understand, are not satisfied with listening, but yearn to respond; and the whole land that for many years had seemed but was not silent, in a few months is overflowing with songs that had issued from highest genius it is true, but from the same source that

is daily welling out its waters in every human breast. The songs that establish themselves among a people must indeed be simple—but the simplest feelings are the deepest, and once that they have received adequate expression, then they die not—but live for ever.

Many of his Love-songs are, as they ought to be, untinged with earthly desire, and some of these are about the most beautiful of any—as

"Wilt thou be my dearie?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
Wilt thou let me cheer thee?
By the treasure of my soul,
That's the love I bear thee!
I swear and vow, that only thou
Shalt ever be my dearie.

Lassie, say thou loes me;
Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
Say na thou'lt refuse me:
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Trusting that thou loes me.
Lassie, let me quickly die,
Trusting that thou loes me."

Nothing can be more exquisitely tender—passionless from the excess of passion—pure from very despair; love yet hopes for love's confession, though it feels it can be but a word of pity to sweeten death.

In the most exquisite of his songs, he connects and blends the tenderest and most passionate emotions with all appearances—animate and inanimate; in them all—and in some by a single touch—we are made to feel that we are in the midst of nature. A bird glints by, and we know we are in the woods—a primrose grows up, and we are among the braes—the mere name of a stream brings its banks before us—or two-three words leave us our own choice of many waters.

"Far dearer to me the lone glen of green bracken,
Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom."

It has been thought that the eyes of "the labouring poor" are not very sensible—nay, that they are insensible to scenery—and that the pleasures thence derived are confined to persons of cultivated taste. True that the country girl, as she "lifts

her leglin, and hies her away," is thinking more of her lover's face and figure—whom she hopes to meet in the evening—than of the trysting-tree, or of the holm where the grey hawthorn has been standing for hundreds of years. Yet she knows right well that they are beautiful; and she feels their beauty in the old song she is singing to herself, that at dead of winter recalls the spring-time, and all the loveliness of the season of leaves. The people know little about painting—how should they? for, unacquainted with the laws of perspective, they cannot *see* the landscape-picture on which instructed eyes gaze till the imagination beholds a paradise. But the landscapes themselves they do see—and they love to look on them. The ploughman does so, as he "homeward plods his weary way;" the reaper as he looks at what Burns calls his own light—"the reaper's nightly beam, mild checkering through the trees." If it were not so, why should they call it "Bonny Scotland"—why should they call him "Sweet Robbie Burns?"

In his songs they think of the flowers as alive, and with hearts: "How blest the flowers that round thee bloom!" In his songs, the birds they hear singing in common hours with common pleasure, or give them not a thought, without losing their own nature partake of theirs, and shun, share, or mock human passion. He is at once the most accurate and the most poetical of ornithologists. By a felicitous epithet he characterises each tribe according to song, plumage, habits, or haunts; often introduces them for sake of their own happy selves; oftener as responsive to ours, in the expression of their own joys and griefs.

"Oh, stay, sweet warbling woodlark, stay,
Nor quit for me the trembling spray;
A hapless lover courts thy lay—
Thy soothing, fond complaining.

Again, again, that tender part,
That I may catch thy melting art;
For surely that wad touch her heart,
Wha kills me wi' disdaining.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind?
Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join'd,
Sic notes o' love could wauken.

Thou tells o' never-ending care :
O' speechless grief and dark despair ;
For pity's sake. sweet bird, nae mair,
Or my poor heart is broken !"

Who was Jeany Cruikshank? Only child "of my worthy friend, Mr William Cruikshank of the High School, Edinburgh." Where did she live? On a floor at the top of a *common stair*, now marked No. 30, in St James's Square. Burns lived for some time with her father—his room being one which has a window looking out from the gable of the house upon the green behind the Register Office. There was little on that green to look at—perhaps "a washing" laid out to dry. But the poet saw a vision—and many a maiden now often sees it too—whose face may be of the coarsest, and her hair not of the finest—but who, in spite of all that, strange to say, has an imagination and a heart.

"A rosebud by my early walk,
Adown a corn-enclosed bawk,
Sae gently bent its thorny stalk,
All on a dewy morning.
Ere twice the shades o' dawn are fled,
In a' its crimson glory spread,
And drooping rich the dewy head,
It scents the early morning.

Within the bush, her covert nest,
A little linnet fondly prest ;
The dew sat chilly on her breast
Sae early in the morning.
She soon shall see her tender brood
The pride, the pleasure o' the wood,
Amang the fresh green leaves bedew'd,
Awake the early morning.

So thou, dear bird, young Jeany fair!
On trembling string, or vocal air,
Shall sweetly pay the tender care,
That tents thy early morning.
So thou, sweet rosebud, young and gay,
Shalt beauteous blaze upon the day,
And bless the parent's evening ray,
That watch'd thy early morning."

Indeed, in all his poetry, what an overflowing of tenderness,

pity, and affection towards all living creatures that inhabit the earth, the water, and the air! Of all men that ever lived, Burns was the least of a sentimentalist; he was your true Man of Feeling. He did not preach to Christian people the duty of humanity to animals; he spoke of them in winning words warm from a manliest breast, as his fellow-creatures, and made us feel what we owe. What child could well be cruel to a helpless animal who had read "The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie"—or "The Twa Dogs?" "The Auld Farmer's New-year's-day Address to his Auld Mare Maggie" has—we know—humanised the heart of a Gilmerton carter. "Not a mouse stirring," are gentle words at that hour from Shakespeare—when thinking of the ghost of a king; and he would have loved brother Burns for saying—"What makes thee startle, at me thy poor earth-born companion *and fellow mortal!*" Safe-housed at fall of a stormy winter-night, of whom does the poet think, along with the unfortunate, the erring, and the guilty of his own race?

"List'ning, the doors and winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And through the drift, deep-lairing sprattle,
Beneath a scar.

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That in the merry months o' spring
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
And close thy ee?"

The poet loved the sportsman; but lamenting in fancy "Tam Samson's Death"—he could not help thinking, that "on his mouldering breast, some spitefu' muirfowl bigs her nest." When at Kirkoswald studying trigonometry, plane and spherical, he sometimes associated with smugglers, but never with poachers. You cannot figure to yourself young Robert Burns stealing stoopingly along under cover of a hedge, with a long gun and a lurcher, to get a shot at a hare sitting, and perhaps washing her face with her paws. No tramper ever "coft fur" at Mossgeil or Ellisland. He could have

joined, had he liked, in the passionate ardour of the rod and the gun, the net and the leister; but he liked rather to think of all those creatures alive and well, "in their native element." In his love-song to "the charming filette who overset his trigonometry," and incapacitated him for the taking of the sun's altitude, he says to her, on proposing to take a walk—

"Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns
Bring autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs, on whirring wings,
Amang the blooming heather.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells;
The plover loves the mountains;
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells;
The soaring hern the fountains:
Through lofty groves the cushat roves,
The path of man to shun it;
The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
The spreading thorn the linnet.

Thus ev'ry kind their pleasure find,
The savage and the tender;
Some social join, and leagues combine;
Some solitary wander:
Avaunt, away! the cruel sway,
Tyrannic man's dominion;
The sportsman's joy, the murd'ring cry,
The flutt'ring, gory pinion!"

Bruar Water, in his Humble Petition to the Noble Duke of Atholl, prays that his banks may be made sylvan, that shepherd, lover, and bard may enjoy the shades; but chiefly for sake of the inferior creatures.

"Delighted doubly then, my Lord,
You'll wander on my banks,
And listen many a gratefu' bird
Return you tuneful thanks."

The sober laverock—the gowdspink gay—the strong blackbird—the clear lintwhite—the mavis mild and mellow—they will all sing "God bless the Duke." And one mute creature will be more thankful than all the rest—"coward maukin sleep secure, low in her grassy form." You know that he threatened to throw Jem Thomson, a farmer's son near Ellis-

land, into the Nith, for shooting at a hare—and in several of his morning landscapes a hare is hirpling by. What human and poetical sympathy is there in his address to the startled wildfowl on Loch Turit! He speaks of "parent, filial, kindred ties;" and in the closing lines who does not feel that it is *Burns* that speaks?

"Or, if man's superior might
Dare invade your native right,
On the lofty ether borne
Man with all his powers you scorn;
Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,
Other lakes and other springs;
And the foe you cannot brave,
Scorn, at least, to be his slave."

Whatever be his mood, grave or gladsome, mirthful or melancholy—or when sorrow smiles back to joy, or care joins hands with folly—he has always a thought to give to them who many think have no thought, but who all seemed to him, from highest to lowest in that scale of being, to possess each its appropriate degree of intelligence and love. In the "Sonnet written on his birth-day, 25th January 1793, on hearing a thrush sing in a morning-walk," it is truly affecting to hear how he connects, on the sudden, his own condition with all its cares and anxieties, with that of the cheerful bird upon the leafless bough—

"Yet come, thou child of poverty and care,
The mite high Heaven bestows, that mite with thee I'll share."

We had intended to speak only of his Songs; and to them we return for a few minutes more, asking you to notice how cheering such of them as deal gladsomely with the concerns of this world must be to the hearts of them who of their own accord sing them to themselves, at easier work, or intervals of labour, or at gloaming when the day's darg is done. All partings are not sad—most are the reverse; lovers do not fear that they shall surely die the day after they have kissed farewell; on the contrary they trust, with the blessing of God, to be married at the term.

"Jockey's taen the parting kiss,
O'er the mountains he is gane;
And with him is a' my bliss,
Nought but griefs with me remain.

Spare my love, ye winds that blaw,
Plashy sleets and beating rain!
Spare my love, thou feathery snaw,
Drifting o'er the frozen plain.

When the shades of evening creep
O'er the day's fair, gladsome ee,
Sound and safely may he sleep,
Sweetly blythe his waukening be!

He will think on her he loves,
Fondly he'll repeat her name;
For where'er he distant roves,
Jockey's heart is still at hame."

There is no great matter or merit, some one may say, in such lines as these—nor is there; but they express sweetly enough some natural sentiments,—and what more would you have in a song? You have had far more in some songs to which we have given the go-by; but we are speaking now of the class of the simply pleasant; and on us their effect is like that of a gentle light falling on a pensive place, when there are no absolute clouds in the sky, and no sun visible either, but when that soft effusion, we know not whence, makes the whole day that had been somewhat sad, serene, and reminds us that it is summer. Believing you feel as we do, we do not fear to displease you by quoting "The Tither Morn."

"The tither morn, when I, forlorn,
Aneath an aik sat moaning,
I didna trow I'd see my jo,
Beside me, 'gain the gloaming.
But he sae trig, lap o'er the rig,
And dautingly did cheer me,
When I, what reck, did least expeck
To see my lad so near me.

His bonnet he, a thought ajee,
Cock'd sprush when first he clasp'd me;
And I, I wat, wi' fainness grat,
While in his grips he press'd me.
Deil take the war! I late and air
Hae wish'd sin' Jock departed;
But now as glad I'm wi' my lad,
As short-syne broken-hearted.

Fu' aft at e'en wi' dancing keen,
When a' were blythe and merry,
I cared na by, sae sad was I,
In absence o' my dearie.
But praise be blest ! my mind's at rest,
I'm happy wi' my Johnny :
At kirk and fair, I'se aye be there,
And be as canty 's ony."

We believe that the most beautiful of his songs are dearest to the people, and these are the passionate and the pathetic; but there are some connected in one way or other with the tender passion, great favourites too, from the light and lively up to the humorous and comic—yet among the broadest of that class there is seldom any coarseness—indecency never—vulgar you may call some of them, if you please; they were not intended to be *genteel.* Flirts and coquettes of both sexes are of every rank; in humble life the saucy and scornful toss their heads full high, or "go by like stour;" "for sake o' gowd she left me" is a complaint heard in all circles; "although the night be ne'er sae weet, and he be ne'er sae weary O," a gentleman of a certain age will make himself ridiculous by dropping on the knees of his corduroy breeches; Auntie would fain become a mother, and in order thereunto a wife, and waylays a hobbletehoy; daughters the most filial think nothing of breaking their mothers' hearts as their grandmothers' were broken before them; innocents, with no other teaching but that of nature, in the conduct of intrigues in which verily there is neither shame nor sorrow, become systematic and consummate hypocrites not worthy to live—single; despairing swains are saved from suicide by peals of laughter from those for whom they fain would die, and so get noosed; —and surely here is a field—indicated and no more—wide enough for the Scottish Comic Muse; and would you know how productive to the hand of genius, you have but to read Burns.

In one of his letters he says, "If I could, and I believe I do it as far as I can, I would wipe away all tears from all eyes." His nature was indeed humane; and the tendernesses and kindlinesses apparent in every page of his poetry, and most of all in his songs—cannot but have a humanising influence on all those classes exposed, by the necessities of their condition, to many causes for ever at work to harden or shut up the

heart. Burns does not keep continually holding up to them the evils of their lot, continually calling on them to endure or to redress; but while he stands up for his Order, its virtues and its rights, and has bolts to hurl at the oppressor, his delight is to inspire contentment. In that solemn "Dirge,"—a spiritual being, suddenly spied in the gloom, seems an Apparition, made sage by sufferings in the flesh, sent to instruct us and all who breathe that "Man was made to mourn."

"Many and sharp the numerous ills
Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves,
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heaven-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

See yonder poor o'erlabour'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly *fellow-worm*
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, though a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn."

But we shall suppose that "brother of the earth" rotten, and forgotten by the "bold peasantry their country's pride," who work without leave from worms. At his work we think we hear a stalwart tiller of the soil humming what must be a verse of Burns.

"Is there, for honest poverty,
That hangs his head, and a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin grey, and a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that.

For a' that, and a' that,
It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that."

A spirit of Independence reigned alike in the Genius and the Character of Burns. And what is it but a strong sense of what is due to Worth apart altogether from the distinctions of society—the vindication of that Worth being what he felt to be the most honoured call upon himself in life? That sense once violated is destroyed, and therefore he guarded it as a sacred thing—only less sacred than Conscience. Yet it belongs to Conscience, and is the prerogative of Man as Man. Sometimes it may seem as if he watched it with jealousy, and in jealousy there is always weakness, because there is fear. But it was not so; he felt assured that his footing was firm and that his back was on a rock. No blast could blow, no air could beguile him from the position he had taken up with his whole soul in "its pride of place." His words were justified by his actions, and his actions truly told his thoughts: his were a bold heart, a bold hand, and a bold tongue; for in the nobility of his nature he knew that, though born and bred in a hovel, he was the equal of the highest in the land; as he was—and no more—of the lowest, so that they too were MEN. For hear him speak—"What signify the silly, idle gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness! When fellow-partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at everything dishonest, and the same scorn at everything unworthy—if they are not in the dependence of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense are they not EQUALS? And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls, were the same way, why may they not be FRIENDS?" He was indeed privileged to write that "Inscription for an Altar to Independence."

"Thou of an independent mind,
With soul resolved, with soul resign'd
Prepared Power's proudest frown to brave,
Who wilt not be, nor have a slave;
Virtue alone who dost revere,
Thy own reproach alone dost fear,
Approach this shrine, and worship here."

Scotland's adventurous sons are now as proud of this moral feature of his poetry as of all the pictures it contains of their native country. Bound up in one volume it is the Manual of Independence. Were they not possessed of the same spirit, they would be ashamed to open it; but what they wear they win, what they eat they earn; and if frugal they be—and that is the right word—it is that on their return they may build a house on the site of their father's hut, and, proud to remember that he was poor, live so as to deserve the blessings of the children of them who walked with him to daily labour on what was then no better than a wilderness, but has now been made to blossom like the rose. Ebenezer Elliott is no flatterer—and he said to a hundred and twenty Scotsmen in Sheffield, met to celebrate the birth-day of Burns—

> "Stern Mother of the deathless dead!
> Where stands a Scot, a freeman stands;
> Self-stayed, if poor—self-clothed—self-fed;
> Mind mighty in all lands.
>
> No wicked plunder need thy sons,
> To save the wretch whom mercy spurns;
> No classic lore thy little ones,
> Who find a Bard in Burns.
>
> Their path though dark, they may not miss;
> Secure they tread on danger's brink;
> They say 'this shall be,' and it is:
> For ere they act, they think."

There are, it is true, some passages in his poetry, and more in his letters, in which this Spirit of Independence partakes too much of pride, and expresses itself in anger and scorn. These, however, were but passing moods, and he did not love to cherish them; no great blame had they been more frequent and permanent—for his noble nature was exposed to many causes of such irritation, but it triumphed over them all. A few indignant flashes broke out against the littleness of the great; but nothing so paltry as personal pique inspired him with feelings of hostility towards the highest orders. His was an imagination that clothed high rank with that dignity which some of the degenerate descendants of old houses had forgotten; and whenever true noblemen "reverenced the lyre" and grasped the hand of the peasant who had received it from

nature as his patrimony, Burns felt it to be nowise inconsistent with the stubbornest independence that ever supported a son of the soil in his struggles with necessity, reverently to doff his bonnet, and bow his head in their presence with a proud humility. Jeffrey did himself honour by acknowledging that he had been at first misled by occasional splenetic passages, in his estimation of Burns's character, and by afterwards joining, in eloquent terms, in the praise bestowed by other kindred spirits on the dignity of its independence. "It is observed," says Campbell with his usual felicity, "that he boasts too much of his independence; but in reality this boast is neither frequent nor obtrusive; and it is in itself the expression of a noble and laudable feeling. So far from calling up disagreeable recollections of rusticity, his sentiments triumph, by their natural energy, over those false and artificial distinctions which the mind is but too apt to form in allotting its sympathies to the sensibilities of the rich and poor. He carries us into the humble scenes of life, not to make us dole out our tribute of charitable compassion to paupers and cottagers, but to make us feel with them on equal terms, to make us enter into their passions and interests, and share our hearts with them as brothers and sisters of the human species."

In nothing else is the sincerity of his soul more apparent than in his Friendships. All who had ever been kind to him he loved till the last. It mattered not to him what was their rank or condition—he returned, and more than returned their affection—he was, with regard to such ties, indeed of the family of the faithful. The consciousness of his infinite superiority to the common race of men, and of his own fame and glory as a Poet, never for a moment made him forget the humble companions of his obscure life, or regard with a haughty eye any face that had ever worn towards him an expression of benevolence. The Smiths, the Muirs, the Browns, and the Parkers, were to him as the Aikens, the Ballantynes, the Hamiltons, the Cunninghames, and the Ainslies—these as the Stewarts, the Gregorys, the Blairs, and the Mackenzies—these again as the Grahams and the Erskines—and these as the Daers, the Glencairns, and the other men of rank who were kind to him,—all were his friends—his benefactors. His heart expanded towards them all, and throbbed with gratitude. His eldest son—and he has much of his

father's intellectual power—bears his own Christian name; the others are *James Glencairn*, and *William Nicol*—so called respectively after a nobleman to whom he thought he owed all—and a schoolmaster to whom he owed nothing—yet equally entitled to bestow—or receive that honour.

There is a beautiful passage in his "Second Commonplace Book," showing how deeply he felt, and how truly he valued, the patronage which the worthy alone can bestow. "What pleasure is in the power of the fortunate and happy, by their notice and patronage, to brighten the countenance and glad the heart of depressed worth! I am not so angry with mankind for their deaf economy of the purse. The goods of this world cannot be divided without being lessened; but why be a niggard of that which bestows bliss on a fellow-creature, yet takes nothing from our own means of enjoyment? Why wrap ourselves in the cloak of our own better fortune, and turn away our eyes lest the wants and cares of our brother mortals should disturb the selfish apathy of our souls?" What was the amount of all the kindness shown him by the Earl of Glencairn? That excellent nobleman at once saw that he was a great genius,—gave him the hand of friendship—and in conjunction with Sir John Whitefoord got the members of the Caledonian Hunt to subscribe for guinea instead of six-shilling copies of his volume. That was all—and it was well. For that Burns was as grateful as for the preservation of life.

> "The bridegroom may forget the bride
> Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
> The monarch may forget the crown
> That on his head an hour hath been;
> The mother may forget the child
> That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
> But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
> And a' that thou hast done for me."

He went into mourning on the death of his benefactor, and desired to know where he was to be buried, that he might attend the funeral, and drop a tear into his grave.

The "Lament for Glencairn" is one of the finest of Elegies. We cannot agree with those critics—some of them of deserved reputation—who have objected to the form in which the poet chose to give expression to his grief. Imagination, touched by human sorrow, loves to idealise; because thereby it purifies,

elevates, and ennobles realities, without impairing the pathos belonging to them in nature. Many great poets—nor do we fear now to mention Milton among the number—have in such strains celebrated the beloved dead. They have gone out, along with the object of their desire, from the real living world in which they had been united, and shadowed forth in imagery that bears a high similitude to it, all that was most spiritual in the communion now broken in upon by the mystery of death. So it is in the "Lycidas"—and so it is in this "Lament." Burns imagines an aged Bard giving vent to his sorrow for his noble master's untimely death, among the "fading yellow woods, that waved o'er Lugar's winding stream." That name at once awakens in us the thought of his own dawning genius; and though his head was yet dark as the raven's wing, and "the locks were bleached white with time" of the Apparition evoked with his wailing harp among "the winds lamenting through the caves," yet we feel on the instant that the imaginary mourner is one and the same with the real—that the old and the young are inspired with the same passion, and have but one heart. We are taken out of the present time, and placed in one far remote; yet by such removal the personality of the poet, so far from being weakened, is enveloped in a melancholy light that shows it more endearingly to our eyes—the harp of other years sounds with the sorrow that never dies—the words heard are the everlasting language of affection; and is not the object of such lamentation aggrandised by thus being lifted into the domain of poetry?

"I've seen sae mony changefu' years,
On earth I am a stranger grown;
I wander in the ways of men,
Alike unknowing and unknown:
Unheard, unpitied, unrelieved,
I bear alane my lade o' care,
For silent, low, on beds of dust,
Lie a' that would my sorrows share.

And last (the sum of a' my griefs!)
My noble master lies in clay;
The flow'r amang our Barons bold,
His country's pride, his country's stay."

We go along with such a mourner in his exaltation of the

character of the mourned—great must have been the goodness to generate such gratitude—that which would have been felt to be exaggeration, if expressed in a form not thus imaginative, is here brought within our unquestioning sympathy—and we are prepared to return to the event in its reality, with undiminished fervour, when Burns reappears in his own character without any disguise, and exclaims—

"Awake thy last sad voice, my harp,
The voice of woe and wild despair;
Awake, resound thy latest lay,
Then sleep in silence evermair!
And thou, my last, best, only friend,
That fillest an untimely tomb,
Accept this tribute from the bard
Thou brought from fortune's mirkest gloom.

In poverty's low barren vale,
Thick mists obscure involved me round;
Though oft I turned the wistful eye,
Nae ray of fame was to be found:
Thou found'st me, like the morning sun
That melts the fogs in limpid air,
The friendless bard and rustic song
Became alike thy fostering care."

The Elegy on "Captain Matthew Henderson"—of whom little or nothing is now known—is a wonderfully fine flight of imagination; but it wants, we think, the deep feeling of the "Lament." It may be called a Rapture. Burns says—"It is a tribute to a man I loved much;" and in "The Epitaph" which follows it, he draws his character—and a noble one it is—in many points resembling his own. With the exception of the opening and concluding stanzas, the Elegy consists entirely of a supplication to Nature to join with him in lamenting the death of the "ae best fellow e'er was born;" and though to our ears there is something grating in that term, yet the disagreeableness of it is done away by the words immediately following:—

"Thee, Matthew, Nature's sel' shall mourn,
By wood and wild,
Where, haply, Pity strays forlorn,
By man exiled.

The poet is no sooner on the wing, than he rejoices in his strength of pinion, and with equal ease soars and stoops. We know not where to look, in the whole range of poetry, for an Invocation to the great and fair objects of the external world, so rich and various in imagery, and throughout so sustained; and here again we do not fear to refer to the "Lycidas"—and to say that Robert Burns will stand a comparison with John Milton.

> "But oh, the heavy change, now thou art gone,
> Now thou art gone, and never must return!
> Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
> With wild thyme, and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
> And all their echoes mourn:
> The willows and the hazel copses green
> Shall now no more be seen,
> Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
> As killing as the canker to the rose,
> Or taint-worm to the weanling-herds that graze,
> Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
> When first the white-thorn blows;
> Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.
>
> * * * * *
> * * * Return, Sicilian Muse,
> And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
> Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
> Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
> Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
> On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparely looks,
> Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
> That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,
> And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
> Bring the rath primrose that forsaken dies,
> The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
> The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
> The glowing violet,
> The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
> With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
> And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
> Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
> And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
> To strew the Laureat herse where Lycid lies."

All who know the "Lycidas," know how impossible it is to detach any one single passage from the rest, without marring

its beauty of relationship—without depriving it of the charm consisting in the rise and fall—the undulation—in which the whole divine poem now gently and now magnificently fluctuates. But even when thus detached, the poetry of these passages is exquisite—the expression is perfect—consummate art has crowned the conceptions of inspired genius—and shall we dare to set by their side stanzas written by a ploughman? We shall. But first hear Wordsworth. In *The Excursion*, the Pedlar says—and the Exciseman corroborates its truth,—

> "The poets in their elegies and hymns
> Lamenting the departed, call the groves;
> They call upon the hills and streams to mourn,
> And senseless rocks: nor idly; for they speak
> In these their invocations with a voice
> Of human passion."

You have heard Milton—hear Burns—

> "Ye hills! near neibors o' the starns,
> That proudly cock your crested cairns!
> Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing yearns,
> Where echo slumbers!
> Come join ye, Nature's sturdiest bairns,
> My wailing numbers!
>
> Mourn, ilka grove the cushat kens!
> Ye haz'lly shaws and briery dens!
> Ye burnies, wimplin down your glens,
> Wi' toddlin din,
> Or foaming strang, wi' hasty stens,
> Frae linn to linn!
>
> Mourn, little harebells o'er the lea;
> Ye stately foxgloves fair to see;
> Ye woodbines, hanging bonnily
> In scented bow'rs;
> Ye roses on your thorny tree,
> The first o' flow'rs.
>
> At dawn, when ev'ry grassy blade
> Droops with a diamond at its head,
> At ev'n, when beans their fragrance shed,
> I' th' rustling gale,
> Ye maukins whiddin through the glade,
> Come join my wail.

Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood ;
Ye grouse that crap the heather bud ;
Ye curlews calling through a clud ;
Ye whistling plover ;
And mourn, ye whirring paitrick brood !—
He's gane for ever !

Mourn, sooty coots, and speckled teals ;
Ye fisher herons, watching eels ;
Ye duck and drake, wi' airy wheels
Circling the lake ;
Ye bitterns, till the quagmire reels,
Rair for his sake.

Mourn, clam'ring craiks at close o' day,
'Mang fields o' flow'ring clover gay ;
And when ye wing your annual way
Frae our cauld shore,
Tell thae far worlds, wha lies in clay,
Wham we deplore.

Ye houlets, frae your ivy bow'r
In some auld tree, or eldritch tow'r,
What time the moon, wi' silent glow'r
Sets up her horn,
Wail through the dreary midnight hour
Till waukrife morn !

Oh, rivers, forests, hills, and plains !
Oft have ye heard my canty strains :
But now, what else for me remains
But tales of woe ?
And frae my een the drapping rains
Maun ever flow.

Mourn, spring, thou darling of the year !
Ilk cowslip cup shall kep a tear :
Thou, simmer, while each corny spear
Shoots up its head,
Thy gay, green, flow'ry tresses shear
For him that's dead.

Thou, autumn, wi' thy yellow hair,
In grief thy sallow mantle tear :
Thou, winter, hurling through the air
The roaring blast,
Wide o'er the naked world declare
The worth we've lost !

Mourn him, thou sun, great source of light!
Mourn, empress of the silent night!
And you, ye twinkling starnies bright,
My Matthew mourn!
For through your orbs he's taen his flight,
Ne'er to return."

Of all Burns's friends the most efficient was Graham of Fintry. To him he owed Exciseman's *diploma*—settlement as a gauger in the District of Ten Parishes, when he was gudeman at Ellisland—translation as gauger to Dumfries—support against insidious foes, despicable yet not to be despised with rumour at their head—vindication at the Excise Board—*pro loco et tempore* supervisorship—and though he knew not of it, security from dreaded degradation on his deathbed. "His First Epistle to Mr Graham of Fintry" is in the style, shall we say it, of Dryden and Pope? It is a noble composition; and these fine, vigorous, rough, and racy lines truly and duly express at once his independence and his gratitude:

"Come thou who giv'st with all a courtier's grace;
Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes!
Prop of my dearest hopes for future times.
Why shrinks my soul, half blushing, half afraid,
Backward, abash'd, to ask thy friendly aid?
I know my need, I know thy giving hand,
I crave thy friendship at thy kind command;
But there are such who court the tuneful nine—
Heavens! should the branded character be mine!
Whose verse in manhood's pride sublimely flows,
Yet vilest reptiles in their begging prose.
Mark, how their lofty independent spirit
Soars on the spurning wing of injured merit!
Seek not the proofs in private life to find;
Pity the best of words should be but wind!
So to heaven's gates the lark's shrill song ascends,
But grovelling on the earth the carol ends.
In all the clam'rous cry of starving want,
They dun benevolence with shameless front;
Oblige them, patronise their tinsel lays,
They persecute you all their future days!
Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
My horny fist assume the plough again;
The piebald jacket let me patch once more;
On eighteen-pence a-week I've lived before.

Though, thanks to Heaven, I dare even that last shift!
I trust, meantime, my boon is in thy gift:
That, placed by thee upon the wish'd-for height,
Where, man and nature fairer in her sight,
My muse may imp her wing for some sublimer flight."

Read over again the last three lines! The favour requested was removal from the laborious and extensive district which he *surveyed* for the Excise at Ellisland to one of smaller dimensions at Dumfries! In another Epistle, he renews the request, and says most affectingly,—

"I dread thee, fate, relentless and severe,
With all a poet's, husband's, father's fear!
Already one strong hold of hope is lost,
Glencairn, the truly noble, lies in dust
(Fled, like the sun eclipsed at noon appears,
And left us darkling in a world of tears):
Oh! hear my ardent, grateful, selfish prayer!—
Fintry, my other stay, long bless and spare!
Through a long life his hopes and wishes crown;
And bright in cloudless skies his sun go down!
May bliss domestic smooth his private path,
Give energy to life, and soothe his latest breath,
With many a filial tear circling the bed of death!"

The favour was granted, and in another Epistle was requited with immortal thanks.

"I call no goddess to inspire my strains,
A fabled muse may suit a bard that feigns:
Friend of my life! my ardent spirit burns,
And all the tribute of my heart returns,
For boons accorded, goodness ever new,
The gift still dearer, as the giver, you.

Thou orb of day! thou other paler light!
And all ye many sparkling stars of night;
If aught that giver from my mind efface,
If I that giver's bounty e'er disgrace;
Then roll to me, along your wand'ring spheres,
Only to number out a villain's years!"

Love, Friendship, Independence, Patriotism—these were the perpetual inspirers of his genius, even when they did not form the theme of his effusions. His religious feelings, his resentment against hypocrisy, and other occasional inspirations,

availed only to the occasion on which they appear. But these influence him at all times, even while there is not a whisper about them, and when himself is unconscious of their operation. Everything most distinctive of his character will be found to appertain to them, whether we regard him as a poet or a man. His Patriotism was of the true poetic kind—intense —exclusive; Scotland and the climate of Scotland were in his eyes the dearest to nature—Scotland and the people of Scotland the mother and the children of liberty. In his exultation, when a thought of foreign lands crossed his fancy, he asked, "What are they? the haunts of the tyrant and slave." This was neither philosophical nor philanthropical; in this Burns was a bigot. And the cosmopolite may well laugh to hear the cottager proclaiming that "the brave Caledonian views with disdain" spicy forests and gold-bubbling fountains with their ore and their nutmegs—and blessing himself in scant apparel on "cauld Caledonia's blast on the wave." The doctrine will not stand the scrutiny of judgment; but with what concentrated power of poetry does the prejudice burst forth! Let all lands have each its own prejudiced, bigoted, patriotic poets, blind and deaf to what lies beyond their own horizon, and thus shall the whole habitable world in due time be glorified. Shakespeare himself was never so happy as when setting up England, in power, in beauty, and in majesty above all the kingdoms of the earth.

In times of national security the feeling of Patriotism among the masses is so quiescent that it seems hardly to exist—in their case national glory or national danger awakens it, and it leaps up armed *cap-à-pie*. But the sacred fire is never extinct in a nation, and in tranquil times it is kept alive in the hearts of those who are called to high functions in the public service—by none is it *beeted* so surely as by the poets. It is the identification of individual feeling and interest with those of a community; and so natural to the human soul is this enlarged act of sympathy, that when not called forth by some great pursuit, peril, or success, it applies itself intensely to internal policy; and hence the animosities and rancour of parties, which are evidences, nay forms, though degenerate ones, of the Patriotic Feeling; and this is proved by the fact that on the approach of common danger, party differences in a great measure cease, and are transmuted into the one har-

monious elemental Love of our Native Land. Burns was said at one time to have been a Jacobin as well as a Jacobite; and it must have required even all his genius to effect such a junction. He certainly wrote some so-so verses to the Tree of Liberty, and like Cowper, Wordsworth, and other great and good men, rejoiced when down fell the Bastile. But when there was a talk of taking our Island, he soon evinced the nature of his affection for the French.

"Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
Then let the loons beware, sir;
There's wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, sir.
The Nith shall run to Corsincon,
And Criffel sink in Solway,
Ere we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally!
Fall de rall, &c.

Oh, let us not like snarling tykes
In wrangling be divided;
Till slap, come in an unco loon,
And wi' a rung decide it.
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Amang oursels united;
For never but by British hands
Maun British wrangs be righted.
Fall de rall, &c.

The kettle o' the kirk and state,
Perhaps a claut may fail in't;
But deil a foreign tinkler loun
Shall ever ca' a nail in't.
Our fathers' bluid the kettle bought,
And wha wad dare to spoil it?—
By heaven! the sacrilegious dog
Shall fuel be to boil it.
Fall de rall, &c.

The wretch that wad a tyrant own,
And the wretch, his true-born brother,
Who would set the *mob* aboon the *throne*,
May they be damn'd together!
Who will not sing, 'God save the King,'
Shall hang as high's the steeple;
But while we sing, 'God save the King,'
We'll ne'er forget the People."

These are far from being "elegant" stanzas—there is even a rudeness about them—but 'tis the rudeness of the Scottish Thistle—a paraphrase of "*nemo me impune lacesset.*" The staple of the war-song is home-grown and home-spun. It flouts the air like a banner *not* idly spread, whereon "the ruddy Lion ramps in gold." Not all the orators of the day, in Parliament or out of it, in all their speeches put together embodied more political wisdom, or appealed with more effective power to the noblest principles of patriotism in the British heart.

"A gentleman of birth and talents" thus writes, in 1835, to Allan Cunningham: "I was at the play in Dumfries, October 1792, the Caledonian Hunt being then in town. The play was *As you like it* — Miss Fontenelle, Rosalind —when 'God save the King' was called for and sung. We all stood up uncovered, but Burns sat still in the middle of the pit, with his hat on his head. There was a great tumult, with shouts of 'Turn him out' and 'Shame, Burns!'—which continued a good while. At last he was either expelled or forced to take off his hat—*I forget which.*" And a lady with whom Robert Chambers once conversed, "remembered being present in the theatre of Dumfries, during the heat of the Revolution, when Burns entered the pit somewhat affected by liquor. On 'God save the King' being struck up, the audience rose as usual, all except the intemperate poet, who cried for 'Ca ira.' A tumult was the consequence, and Burns was compelled to leave the house." We cannot believe that Burns ever was guilty of such vulgar insolence—such brutality; nothing else at all like it is recorded of him; and the worthy story-tellers are not at one as to the facts. The gentleman's memory is defective; but had he himself been the offender, surely he would not have forgot whether he had been compelled to take off his hat, or had been jostled, perhaps only kicked out of the play-house. The lady's eyes and ears were sharper—for she saw "Burns enter the pit somewhat affected by liquor," and then heard him "cry for Ca ira." By what means he was "compelled to leave the house" she does not say; but as he was "sitting in the middle of the pit," he must have been walked out very gently, so as not to have attracted the attention of the male narrator. If this public outrage on all decorum, decency, and loyalty, had been per-

petrated by Burns, *in October*, one is at a loss to comprehend how, *in December*, he could have been "surprised, confounded, and distracted by Mr Mitchell, the Collector, telling me that he has received an order for your Board to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government." The fact we believe to be this—that Burns, whose loyalty was suspected, had been rudely commanded to take off his hat by some vociferous time-servers—*just as he was going to do so*—that the row arose from his declining to uncover on compulsion, and subsided on his disdainfully doffing his beaver of his own accord. Had he cried for 'Ca ira,' he would have deserved dismissal from the Excise; and in his own opinion, translation to another post—"Wha will not sing God save the King, shall hang as high's the steeple." *The year before*, "during the heat of the French Revolution," Burns composed his grand war-song—"Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies," and sent it to Mrs Dunlop with these words: "I have just finished the following song, which to a lady, the descendant of Wallace, and many heroes of his truly illustrious line—and herself the mother of several soldiers—needs neither preface nor apology." And *the year after*, he composed "The Poor and Honest Sodger," "which was sung," says Allan Cunningham, "in every cottage, village, and town. Yet the man who wrote it was supposed by the mean and the spiteful to be no well-wisher to his country!" Why, as men who have any hearts at all, love their parents in any circumstances, so they love their country, be it great or small, poor or wealthy, learned or ignorant, free or enslaved; and even disgrace and degradation will not quench their filial affection to it. But Scotsmen have good reason to be proud of their country; not so much for any particular event, as for her whole historical progress. Particular events, however, are thought of by them as the landmarks of that progress; and these are the great points of history "conspicuous in the nation's eye." Earlier times present "the unconquered Caledonian spear;" later, the unequal but generally victorious struggles with the sister country, issuing in national independence; and later still, the holy devotion of the soul of the people to their own profound religious Faith, and its simple Forms. Would that Burns had pondered more

on that warfare! That he had sung its final triumph! But we must be contented with his "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled;" and with repeating after it with him, "So may God defend the cause of truth and liberty, as he did that day! Amen!"

Mr Syme tells us that Burns composed this ode on the 31st of July 1793, on the moor road between Kenmure and Gatehouse. "The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became lowering and dark—the winds sighed hollow—the lightning gleamed—the thunders rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene—he spoke not a word—but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall—it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements rumble their bellyful upon our defenceless heads." That is very fine indeed; and "what do you think," asks Mr Syme, "Burns was about? He was charging the English Army along with Bruce at Bannockburn." On the second of August—when the weather was more sedate —on their return from St Mary's Isle to Dumfries "he was engaged in the same manner;" and it appears from one of his own letters, that he returned to the charge one evening in September. The thoughts, and feelings, and images, came rushing upon him during the storm—they formed themselves into stanzas, like so many awkward squads of raw levies, during the serene state of the atmosphere—and under the harvest moon, firm as the measured tread of marching men, with admirable precision they wheeled into line. This account of the composition of the Ode would seem to clear Mr Syme from a charge nothing short of falsehood brought against him by Allan Cunningham. Mr Syme's words are, "I said that in the midst of the storm, on the wilds of Kenmure, Burns was rapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was charging the English army along with Bruce at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner in our ride home from St Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. *Next day he produced me the Address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy to Dalzell.*" Nothing can be more circumstantial; and if not true, it is a thumper. Allan says, "Two or three plain words, and a stubborn date or two, will go far, I fear, to raise this pleasing legend into the regions of romance. The Galloway adventure, according to Syme,

happened in July; but in the succeeding September, the poet announced the song to Thomson in these words: "There is a tradition which I have met with in many places in Scotland that the air of 'Hey tuttie taittie' was Robert Bruce's march at the Battle of Bannockburn. This thought in my *yesternight's evening walk* warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode—that one might suppose to be the royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning. I showed the air to Urbani, who was greatly pleased with it, and begged me to make soft verses for it; but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing idea of some other struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused up my rhyming mania." Currie, to make the letter agree with the legend, altered *yesternight's evening walk* into solitary wanderings. Burns was indeed a remarkable man, and yielded no doubt to strange impulses; but to compose a song "in thunder, lightning, and in rain," intimates such self-possession as few possess. We can more readily believe that Burns wrote "*yesternight's evening walk*," to save himself the trouble of entering into any detail of his previous study of the subject, than that Syme told a downright lie. As to composing a song in a thunderstorm, Cunningham—who is himself "a remarkable man," and has composed some songs worthy of being classed with those of Burns, would find it one of the easiest and pleasantest of feats; for lightning is among the most harmless vagaries of the electric fluid, and, in a hilly country, seldom singes but worsted stockings and sheep.

Burns sent the Address in its perfection to George Thomson, recommending it to be set to the old air, "*Hey tuttie taittie*" —according to Tradition, who cannot, however, be reasonably expected "to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth"—Robert Bruce's march at the Battle of Bannockburn. A committee of taste sat on "*Hey tuttie taittie*," and pronounced it execrable. "I happened to dine yesterday," says Mr Thomson, "with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it; entreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as '*Hey tuttie*

taittie.' Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it, for I never heard any person—and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs—I say, I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice. I have been running over the whole hundred airs—of which I have lately sent you the list—and I think Lewie Gordon is most happily adapted to your ode, at least with a very slight alteration of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. Now the variation I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse, the only line too short for the air, is as follows: Verse 1st, Or to *glorious victory.* 2d, *Chains*—chains and slavery. 3d, Let him, *let him* turn and flee. 4th, Let him *bravely* follow me. 5th, But *they shall*, they shall be free. 6th, Let us, *let us* do or die." "Glorious" and "bravely," bad as they are, especially "bravely," which is indeed most bitter bad, might have been borne; but just suppose for a moment, that Robert Bruce had, in addressing his army "on the morning of that eventful day," come over again in that odd way every word he uttered, "chains—chains;" "let him —let him;" "they shall—they shall;" "let us—let us;" why, the army would have thought him a Bauldy! Action, unquestionably, is the main point in oratory, and Bruce might have imposed on many by the peculiar style in which it is known he handled his battle-axe, but we do not hesitate to assert that had he stuttered in that style, the English would have won the day. Burns winced sorely, but did what he could to accommodate Lewie Gordon.

"The only line," said Mr T., "which I dislike in the whole of the song is 'Welcome to your gory bed.' Would not another word be preferable to 'welcome?'" Mr T. proposed "honour's bed;" but Burns replied, "your idea of 'honour's bed' is, though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so if you please we will let the line stand as it is." But Mr T. was tenacious: "One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying anything to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. 'Gory' presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them 'Welcome to your gory bed,' seems rather a dis-

couraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shown the song *to three friends of excellent taste*, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest 'Now prepare for honour's bed, or for glorious victory.'" Quoth Burns grimly—"My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alteration would, in my opinion, make it tame. I have scrutinised it over and over again, and to the world some way or other it shall go, as it is." That four Scotsmen, taken *seriatim et separatim*—in the martial ardour of their patriotic souls should object to "Welcome to your gory bed," from an uncommunicated apprehension common to the nature of them all and operating like an instinct, that it was fitted to frighten Robert Bruce's army, and make it take to its heels, leaving the cause of Liberty and Independence to shift for itself, is a coincidence that sets at defiance the doctrine of chances, proves history to be indeed an old almanac, and national character an empty name.

"Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots wham Bruce has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victory!

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lower;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die!"

All Scotsmen at home and abroad swear this is the Grandest Ode out of the Bible. What if it be not an Ode at all? An Ode, however, let it be; then, wherein lies the power it possesses of stirring up into a devouring fire the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum?* The two armies suddenly stand before us in order of battle—and in the grim repose preceding the tempest we hear but the voice of Bruce. The whole Scottish army hears it—now standing on their feet—risen from their knees as the Abbot of Inchaffray had blessed them and the Banner of Scotland with its roots of Stone. At the first six words a hollow murmur is in that wood of spears. "Welcome to your gory bed!" a shout that shakes the sky. Hush! hear the King. At *Edward's* name what a yell! "Wha will be a traitor knave?" Muttering thunder growls reply. The inspired Host in each appeal anticipates the Leader—yet shudders with fresh wrath, as if each reminded it of some intolerable wrong. "Let us do or die"—the English are overthrown—and Scotland is free.

That is a very Scottish critique indeed—but none the worse for that; so our English friends must forgive it, and be consoled by Flodden. The ode *is* sublime. Death and Life at that hour are one and the same to the heroes. So that Scotland but survive, what is breath or blood to them? Their being is in their country's liberty, and with it secured they will live for ever.

Our critique is getting more and more Scottish still; so to rid ourselves of nationality, we request such of you as think we overlaud the Ode to point out one word in it that would be better away. You cannot. Then pray have the goodness to point out one word missing that ought to have been there—please to insert a desiderated stanza. You cannot. Then let the bands of all the Scottish regiments play "Hey tuttie taittie;" and the two Dunedins salute one another with a salvo that shall startle the echoes from Berwick Law to Benmore.

Of the delight with which Burns laboured for Mr Thomson's Collection, his letters contain some lively description. "You cannot imagine," says he, 7th April 1793, "how much this

business has added to my enjoyment. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book and ballad-making are now as completely my hobby as ever fortification was my Uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race (God grant I may take the right side of the winning post), and then, cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say or sing, 'Sae merry as we a' hae been,' and raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of Coila shall be, 'Good night, and joy be wi' you a'!'" James Gray was the first who, independently of every other argument, proved the impossibility of the charges that had too long been suffered to circulate without refutation against Burns's character and conduct during his later years, by pointing to these almost daily effusions of his clear and unclouded genius. His innumerable Letters furnish the same best proof; and when we consider how much of his time was occupied by his professional duties, how much by perpetual interruption of visitors from all lands, how much by blameless social intercourse with all classes in Dumfries and its neighbourhood, and how frequently he suffered under constitutional ailments affecting the very seat and source of life, we cannot help despising the unreflecting credulity of his biographers who, with such *products* before their eyes, such a display of feeling, fancy, imagination, and intellect continually alive and on the alert, could keep one after another for twenty years in doleful dissertations deploring over his *habits*—most of them at the close of their wearisome moralising anxious to huddle all up, that his countrymen might not be obliged to turn away their faces in shame from the last scene in the Tragedy of the Life of Robert Burns.

During the four years Burns lived in Dumfries he was never known for one hour to be negligent of his professional duties. We are but imperfectly acquainted with the details of the business of a gauger, but the calling must be irksome; and he was an active, steady, correct, courageous officer—to be relied on equally in his conduct and his accounts. Josiah Walker, who was himself, if we mistake not, for a good many years in the Customs or Excise at Perth, will not allow him to have been a good gauger. In descanting on the unfortunate circumstances of his situation, he says with a voice of authority,—

His superiors were bound to attend to no qualification, but such as was conducive to the benefit of the revenue; and it would have been equally criminal in them to pardon any incorrectness on account of his literary genius, as on account of his dexterity in ploughing. The merchant or attorney who acts for himself alone, is free to overlook some errors of his clerk, for the sake of merits totally unconnected with business; but the Board of Excise had no power to indulge their poetical taste, or their tenderness for him by whom it had been gratified, at the expense of the public. Burns was therefore in a place where he could turn his peculiar endowments to little advantage; and where he could not, without injustice, be preferred to the most obtuse and uninteresting of his brethren, who surpassed him in the humble recommendation of exactness, vigilance, and sobriety. Attention to these circumstances might have prevented insinuations against the liberality of his superior officers, for showing so little desire to advance him, and so little indulgence to those eccentricities for which the natural temperament of genius could be pleaded. For two years, however, Burns stood sufficiently high in the opinion of the Board, and it is surely by no means improper that, where professional pretensions are nearly balanced, the additional claims of literary talent should be permitted to turn the scale. Such was the reasoning of a particular member of the Board—whose taste and munificence were of corresponding extent, and who saw no injustice in giving some preference to an officer who could write permits as well as any other, and poems much better.

Not for worlds would we say a single syllable derogatory from the merits of the Board of Excise. We respect the character of the defunct; and did we not, still we should have the most delicate regard to the feelings of its descendants, many of whom are probably now prosperous gentlemen. It was a Board that richly deserved, in all its dealings, the utmost eulogies with which the genius and gratitude of Josiah Walker could brighten its green cloth. Most criminal indeed would it have been in such a Board—most wicked and most sinful—"to pardon any incorrectness on account of Burns's literary genius, as on account of his dexterity in ploughing." Deeply impressed with a sense—approaching to that of awe—of the responsibility of the Board to its conscience and its country, we feel that it is better late than never, thus to declare before the whole world, A.D. 1840, that from winter 1791 to summer 1796, the "Board had no power to indulge their poetical taste, or their tenderness for him by whom it

had been gratified, at the expense of the public." The Board, we doubt not, had a true innate poetical taste, and must have derived a far higher and deeper delight from the poems than the permits of Burns; nay, we are willing to believe that it was itself the author of a volume of poetry, and editor of a literary journal.

But surpassing even Josiah Walker in our veneration of the Board, we ask, what has all this to do with the character of Burns? Its desire and its impotency to promote him are granted; but of what incorrectness had Burns been guilty, which it would have been criminal in the Board to pardon? By whom, among the "most obtuse and uninteresting of his brethren," had he been surpassed "in the humble recommendation of exactness, vigilance, and sobriety?" Not by a single one. Mr Findlater, who was Burns's supervisor from his admission into the Excise, *and sat by him the night before he died*, says,—

In all that time, the superintendence of his behaviour, as an officer of the revenue, was a part of my official province, and it may be supposed I would not be an inattentive observer of the general conduct of a man and a poet so celebrated by his countrymen. In the former capacity he was exemplary in his attention, and was even jealous of the least imputation on his vigilance. . . . . It was not till near the latter end of his days that there was any falling off in this respect, and this was amply accounted for in the pressure of disease and accumulating infirmities. I will farther avow, that I never saw him—which was very frequently while he lived at Ellisland—and still more so, almost every day, after he removed to Dumfries, but in hours of business he was quite himself, and capable of discharging the duties of his office; nor was he ever known to drink by himself, or ever to indulge in the use of liquor on a forenoon. I have seen Burns in all his various phases—in his convivial moments—in his sober moods—and in the bosom of his family; indeed, I believe that I saw more of him than any other individual had occasion to see, after he became an excise officer, and I never beheld anything like the gross enormities with which he is now charged. That when set down on an evening with a few friends whom he liked, he was apt to prolong the social hour beyond the bounds which prudence would dictate, is unquestionable; but in his family I will venture to say he was never otherwise than as attentive and affectionate to a high degree.

Such is the testimony of the supervisor respecting the

gauger; and in that capacity Burns stands up one of its very best servants before the Board. There was no call, therefore, for Josiah's Jeremiad. But our words have not been wasted; for Burns's character has suffered far more from such aspersions as these, which, easily as they can be wiped away, were too long left as admitted stains on his memory, than from definite and direct charges of specific facts; and it is still the duty of every man who writes about him, to apply the sponge. Nothing, we repeat, shall tempt us to blame or abuse the Board. But we venture humbly to confess that we do not clearly see that the Board would have been "gratifying its tenderness at the expense of the public," had it, when told by Burns that he was dying, and disabled by the hand of God from performing actively the duties of his temporary supervisorship, requested *its maker* to continue to him for a few months his full salary—seventy pounds a-year—instead of reducing it in the proportion of one-half—not because he was a genius, a poet, and the author of many immortal productions —but merely because he was a man and an exciseman, and moreover the father of a few mortal children, who with their mother were in want of bread.

Gray, whom we knew well and highly esteemed, was a very superior man to honest Findlater—a man of poetical taste and feeling, and a scholar—on all accounts well entitled to speak of the character of Burns; and though there were no bounds to his enthusiasm when poets and poetry were the themes of his discourse, he was a worshipper of truth, and rightly believed that it was best seen in the light of love and admiration. Compare his bold, generous, and impassioned eulogy on the noble qualities and dispositions of his illustrious friend, with the timid, guarded, and repressed praise, for ever bordering on censure, of biographers who never saw the poet's face, and yet have dared to draw his character with the same assurance of certainty in their delineations as if they had been of the number of his familiars, and had looked a thousand times, by night and day, into the saddest secrets of his heart. Far better, surely, in a world like this, to do more rather than less than justice to the goodness of great men. No fear that the world, in its final judgment, will not make sufficient deduction from the laud, if it be exaggerated, which love, inspired by admiration and pity, delights to bestow, as the sole tribute

now in its power, on the virtues of departed genius. Calumny may last for ages—we had almost said for ever; lies have life even in their graves, and centuries after they have been interred they will burst their cerements, and walk up and down, in the face of day, undistinguishable to the weak eyes of mortals from truths—till they touch; and then the truths expand, and the lies shrivel up, but after a season to reappear, and to be welcomed back again by the dwellers in this delusive world.

He was courted (says Gray) by all classes of men for the fascinating powers of his conversation, but over his social scene uncontrolled passion never presided. Over the social bowl, his wit flashed for hours together, penetrating whatever it struck, like the fire from heaven; but even in the hour of thoughtless gaiety and merriment I never knew it tainted by indecency. It was playful or caustic by turns, following an allusion through all its windings; astonishing by its rapidity, or amusing by its wild originality and grotesque yet natural combinations, but never, within my observation, disgusting by its grossness. In his morning hours, I never saw him like one suffering from the effects of last night's intemperance. He appeared then clear and unclouded. He was the eloquent advocate of humanity, justice, and political freedom. From his paintings, virtue appeared more lovely, and piety assumed a more celestial mien. While his keen eye was pregnant with fancy and feeling, and his voice attuned to the very passion which he wished to communicate, it would hardly have been possible to conceive any being more interesting and delightful. . . . The men with whom he generally associated were not of the lowest order. He numbered among his intimate friends many of the most respectable inhabitants of Dumfries and the vicinity. Several of those were attached to him by ties that the hand of calumny, busy as it was, could never snap asunder. They admired the poet for his genius, and loved the man for the candour, generosity, and kindness of his nature. His early friends clung to him through good and bad report, with a zeal and fidelity that prove their disbelief of the malicious stories circulated to his disadvantage. Among them were some of the most distinguished characters in this country, and not a few females, eminent for delicacy, taste, and genius. They were proud of his friendship, and cherished him to the last moment of his existence. He was endeared to them even by his misfortunes, and they still retain for his memory that affectionate veneration which virtue alone inspires.

Gray tells us, too, that it came under his own view pro-

fessionally that Burns superintended the education of his children—and promising children they were, nor has that promise been disappointed—with a degree of care that he had never known surpassed by any parent whatever; that to see him in the happiest light you had to see him, as he often did, in his own house, and that nothing could exceed the mutual affection between husband and wife in that lowly tenement. Yet of this man, Josiah Walker, who claims to have been his friend as well as James Gray, writes, "Soured by disappointment, and stung with occasional remorse, *impatient of finding little to interest him at home*, and rendered inconstant from returns of his hypochondriacal ailment, multiplied by his irregular life, he saw the difficulty of keeping terms with the world; *and abandoned the attempt in a rash and regardless despair!*"

It may be thought by some that we have referred too frequently to Walker's Memoir—perhaps that we have spoken of it with too much asperity—and that so respectable a person merited tenderer treatment at our hands. He was a respectable person, and for that very reason we hope by our strictures to set him aside for ever as a biographer of Burns. He had been occasionally in company with the Poet in Edinburgh, in 1787, and had seen him during his short visit at Atholl House. "Circumstances led him to Scotland in November 1795, after an absence of eight years, and he felt strongly prompted" to visit his old friend; for your commonplace man immediately becomes hand in glove with your man of genius, to whom he has introduced himself, and ever after the first interview designates him by that flattering appellation "my friend."

For this purpose I went to Dumfries, and called upon him early in the forenoon. I found him in a small house of one story. He was sitting in a window-seat reading with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence, and altogether without that snugness and seclusion which a student requires. After conversing with him for some time, he proposed a walk, and promised to conduct me through some of his favourite haunts. We accordingly quitted the town, and wandered a considerable way up the beautiful banks of the Nith. Here he gave me an account of his latest productions, and repeated some satirical ballads which he had composed, to favour one of the candidates at last election. These I thought inferior to his other pieces, though they had some lines in which dignity compensated for coarseness. He repeated also his fragment of an *Ode to Liberty*, with marked and peculiar energy, and showed a disposition which, how-

ever, was easily repressed, to throw out political remarks, of the same nature with those for which he had been reprehended. On finishing our walk, he passed some time with me at the inn, and I left him early in the evening, to make another visit at some distance from Dumfries. On the second morning after I returned with a friend—who was acquainted with the poet—and we found him ready to pass a part of the day with us at the inn. On this occasion I did not think him quite so interesting as he had appeared at the outset. His conversation was too elaborate, and his expression weakened by a frequent endeavour to give it artificial strength. He had been accustomed to speak for applause in the circles which he frequented, and seemed to think it necessary, in making the most common remark, to depart a little from the ordinary simplicity of language, and to couch it in something of epigrammatic point. In his praise and censure he was so decisive, as to render a dissent from his judgment difficult to be reconciled with the laws of good breeding. His wit was not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles, though I thought him rather unnecessarily free in the avowal of his excesses. Such were the clouds by which the pleasures of the evening were partially shaded, but frequent coruscations of genius were visible between them. When it began to grow late, he showed no disposition to retire, but called for fresh supplies of liquor with a freedom which might be excusable, as we were in an inn, and no condition had been distinctly made, though it might easily have been inferred, had the inference been welcome, that he was to consider himself as our guest; nor was it till he saw us worn out that he departed about three in the morning with a reluctance, which probably proceeded less from being deprived of our company, than from being confined to his own. Upon the whole, I found this last interview not quite so gratifying as I had expected; although I discovered in his conduct no errors which I had not seen in men who stand high in the favour of society, or sufficient to account for the mysterious insinuations which I heard against his character. He on this occasion drank freely without being intoxicated—a circumstance from which I concluded, not only that his constitution was still unbroken, but that he was not addicted to solitary cordials; for if he had tasted liquor in the morning, he must have easily yielded to the excess of the evening. He did not, however, always escape so well. About two months after, returning at the same unseasonable hour from a similar revel, in which he was probably better supported by his companions, he was so much disordered as to occasion a considerable delay in getting home, where he arrived with the chill of cold without, and inebriety within, &c.

And for this the devotee had made what is called "a pil-

grimage to the shrine of genius" as far as Dumfries! Is this the spirit in which people with strong propensities for poetry are privileged to write of poets, long after they have been gathered to their rest? No tenderness—no pity—no respect—no admiration—no gratitude—no softening of heart—no kindling of spirit—on recollection of his final farewell to Robert Burns! If the interview had not been satisfactory, he was bound in friendship to have left no record of it. Silence in that case was a duty especially incumbent on him who had known Burns in happier times, when "Dukes, and Lords, and mighty Earls" were proud to receive the ploughman. He might not know it then, but he knew it soon afterwards, that Burns was much broken down in body and in spirit.

Those two days should have worn to him in retrospect a mournful complexion; and the more so, that he believed Burns to have been then a ruined man in character, which he had once prized above life. He calls upon him early in the forenoon, and finds him "in a small house of one story (it happened to have two) on a window-seat reading, with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence." After eight years' absence from Scotland, did not his heart leap at the sight of her greatest son sitting thus happy in his own humble household? Twenty years after, did not his heart melt at the rising up of the sanctified image? No—for the room was "altogether *without that appearance of snugness* and seclusion which a student requires!" The Poet conducted him through some of his beautiful haunts, and for his amusement let off some of his electioneering squibs, which are among the very best ever composed, and, Whiggish as they are, might have tickled a Tory as they jogged along; but Jos thought them "inferior to his other pieces," and so no doubt they were to the "Cottar's Saturday Night," and "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled." Perhaps they walked as far as Lincluden—and the bard repeated his famous fragment of an "Ode to Liberty"—with "marked and peculiar energy." The listener ought to have lost his wits, and to have leapt sky-high. But he who was destined to "The Defence of Order," felt himself called by the voice that sent him on that mission, to rebuke the bard on the banks of his own river—for "he showed a disposition which, however, was easily repressed, to throw out political remarks, of the same nature with those

for which he had been reprehended" three years before by the Board of Excise! Mr Walker was not a Commissioner. Burns, it is true, had been told "not to think;" but here was a favourable opportunity for violating with safety that imperial mandate. Woods have ears, but in their whispers they betray no secrets—had Burns talked treason, 'twould have been pity to stop his tongue. The world is yet rather in the dark as to "the political remarks for which he had been reprehended," and as he "threw out some of the same nature," why was the world allowed to remain unenlightened? What right had Josiah Walker to repress any remarks made, in the confidence of friendship, by Robert Burns? And what power? Had Burns chosen it, he could as easily have *squabashed* Josiah as thrown him into the Nith. He was not to be put down by fifty such; he may have refrained, but he was not repressed, and in courtesy to his companion, treated him with an old wife's song.

The record of the second day is shameful. To ask any person, however insignificant, to your inn, and then find fault with him in a private letter for keeping you out of bed, would not be gentlemanly; but of such offence twenty years after his death publicly to accuse Burns! No mention is made of dinner—and we shrewdly suspect Burns dined at home. However, he gave up two days to the service of his friend, and his friend's friend, and such was his reward. Why did not this dignified personage "repress" Burns's licentious wit as well as his political opinions? If it was "not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles," why mention it at all? What were "the excesses" of which he was unnecessarily free in the avowal? They could not have regarded unlawful intercourse with the sex—for "they were not sufficient to account for the mysterious insinuations against his character," all of which related to women. Yet this wretched mixture of meanness, worldliness, and morality, interlarded with some liberal sentiment, and spiced with spite, absolutely seems intended for a vindication!

There are generally two ways at least of telling the same story; and 'tis pity we have not Burns's own account of that long *sederunt*. It is clear that before midnight he had made the discovery that his right and his left hand assessor were a couple of solemn blockheads, and that, to relieve the tedium,

he kept plying them with all manner of *bams*. Both gentlemen were probably in black, and though laymen, decorous as deacons on religion and morality—defenders of the faith—sententious champions of Church and State. It must have been amusing to see them gape. Nobody ever denied that Burns always conducted himself with the utmost propriety in presence of those whom he respected for their genius, their learning, or their worth. Without sacrificing an atom of his independence, how deferential, nay, how reverential, was he in his behaviour to Dugald Stewart! Had *he* and Dr Blair entertained Burns as their guest in that inn, how delightful had been the evening's record! No such "licentious wit as is unhappily too venial in higher circles" would have flowed from his lips—no "unnecessarily free avowal of his excesses." He would have delighted the philosopher and the divine with his noble sentiments as he had done of old—the illustrious Professor would have remembered and heard again the beautiful eloquence that charmed him on the Braid Hills. There can be nothing unfair surely in the conjecture, that these gentlemen occasionally contributed a sentence or two to the stock of conversation. They were *entertaining* Burns, and good manners must have induced them now and then "here to interpose" with a small smart remark—sentiment facete —or unctuous anecdote. Having lived in "higher circles," and heard much of "the licentious wit unhappily too venial there," we do not well see how they could have avoided giving their guest a few specimens of it. Grave men are often gross—and they were both grave as ever was earthen ware. Such wit is the most contagious of any; and "budge doctors of the Stoic fur," then express "Fancies" that are anything but "Chaste and Noble." Who knows but that they were driven into indecency by the desperation of self-defence—took refuge in repartee—and fought the gauger with his own rod? That Burns, in the dead silence that ever and anon occurred, should have called for "fresh supplies of liquor," is nothing extraordinary. For there is not in nature or in art a sadder spectacle than an empty bottle standing in the centre of a circle, equidistant from three friends, one of whom had returned to his native land after a yearning absence of eight years, another anonymous, and the third the author of "Scotch Drink" and the "Earnest Cry." Josiah more than insinuates

that he himself shy'd the bottle. We more than doubt it—we believe that for some hours he turned up his little finger as frequently as Burns. He did right to desist as soon as he had got his dose, and of that he was not only the best but the only judge; he appears to have been sewn up "when it began to grow late;" Burns was sober as a lark "about three in the morning." It is likely enough that "about two months after, Burns was better supported by his companions at a *similar revel*"—so much better indeed in every way that the *revel was dissimilar;* but still we cling to our first belief, that the two gentlemen in black drank as much as could have been reasonably expected of them—that is, as much as they could hold; had they attempted more, there is no saying what might have been the consequences. And we still continue to think, too, that none but a heartless man, or a man whose heart had been puffed up like a bladder with vanity, would have tagged to the tail of his pitiful tale of that night, that cruel statement about "cold without, and inebriety within," which was but the tittle-tattle of gossiping tradition, and most probably a lie.

This is the proper way to treat all such *memorabilia*—with the ridicule of contempt and scorn. Refute falsehood first, and then lash the fools that utter it. Much of the obloquy that so long rested on the memory of our great National Poet originated in frivolous hearsays of his life and conversation, which in every telling lost some portion of whatever truth might have once belonged to them, and acquired at least an equal portion of falsehood, till they became unmixed calumnies —many of them of the blackest kind—got into print, which is implicitly believed by the million—till the simple story, which, as first told, had illustrated some interesting trait of his character or genius, as last told, redounded to his disgrace, and was listened to by the totally abstinent with uplifted eyes, hands, and shoulders, as an anecdote of the dreadful debaucheries of Robert Burns.

That he did sometimes associate, while in Edinburgh, with persons not altogether worthy of him, need not be denied, nor wondered at, for it was inevitable. He was not for ever beset with the consciousness of his own supereminence. Prudence he did not despise, and he has said some strong things in her praise; but she was not, in his system of morality, the Queen of Virtues. His genius, so far from separating him from any

portion of his kind, impelled him towards humanity, without fear and without suspicion. No saint or prude was he to shun the society of "Jolly companions every one." Though never addicted to drinking, he had often set the table in a roar at Tarbolton, Mauchline, Kirkoswald, Irvine, and Ayr, and was he all at once to appear in the character of dry Quaker in Edinburgh? Were the joys that circle round the flowing bowl to be interdicted to him alone, the wittiest, the brightest, the most original, and the most eloquent of all the men of his day? At Ellisland we know for certain that his domestic life was temperate and sober; and that beyond his own doors his convivialities among "gentle and semple," though not unfrequent, were not excessive, and left his character without any of those deeper stains with which it has been since said to have been sullied. It is for ever to be lamented that he was more dissipated at Dumfries—how much more, and under what stronger temptations, can be told in not many words. But every glass of wine "or stouter cheer" he drank —like mere ordinary men too fond of the festive hour—seems to have been set down against him as a separate sin; and the world of fashion, and of philosophy too, we fear, both of which used him rather scurvily at last, would not be satisfied unless Burns could be made out—a drunkard! Had he not been such a wonderful man in conversation, he might have enjoyed unhurt the fame of his poetry. But what was reading his poetry, full as it is of mirth and pathos, to hearing the Poet! When all were desirous of the company of a man of such genius and such dispositions, was it in human nature to be always judicious in the selection or rejection of associates? His deepest and best feelings he for the most part kept sacred for communion with those who were held by him in honour as well as love. But few were utterly excluded from the cordiality of one who, in the largeness of his heart, could sympathise with all, provided he could but bring out, by the stroke of the keen-tempered steel of his own nature, some latent spark of humanity from the flint of theirs; and it is easy to see with what dangers he thus must have been surrounded, when his genius and humour, his mirth and glee, his fun and frolic, and all the outrageous merriment of his exhilarated or maddened imagination, came to be considered almost as common property by all who chose to introduce themselves to

Robert Burns, and thought themselves entitled to do so because they could prove they had his poems by heart. They sent for the gauger, and the gauger came. A prouder man breathed not, but he had never been subjected to the ceremonial of manners, the rule of artificial life; and he was ready, at all times, to grasp the hand held out in friendship, to go when a message said come, for he knew that his "low-roof'd house" was honoured because by his genius he had greatly glorified his people.

We have seen, from one characteristic instance, how shamefully his condescension must often have been abused; and no doubt but that sometimes he behaved imprudently in such parties, and incurred the blame of intemperance. Frequently must he have joined them with a heavy heart! How little did many not among the worst of those who stupidly stared at the "wondrous guest" understand of his real character! How often must they have required mirth from him in his melancholy, delight in his despair! The coarse buffoon ambitious to show off before the author of "Tam o' Shanter," and "The Holy Fair"—how could it enter into his fat heart to conceive, in the midst of his own roaring ribaldry, that the fire-eyed son of genius was a hypochondriac, sick of life! Why, such a fellow would think nothing next morning of impudently telling his cronies that, on the whole, he had been disappointed in the Poet. Or in another key, forgetting that the Poet who continued to sit late at a tavern table, need own no relationship but that of time and place with the proser who was lying resignedly under it, the drunkard boasts all over the city of the glorious night he had had with Burns.

But of the multitudes who thus sought the society of Burns, there must have been many in every way qualified to enjoy it. His fame had crossed the Tweed; and though a knowledge of his poetry could not then have been prevalent over England, he had ardent admirers among the most cultivated classes, before whose eyes, shadowed in a language but imperfectly understood, had dawned a new and beautiful world of rustic life. Young men of generous birth, and among such lovers of genius some doubtless themselves endowed with the precious gift, acquainted with the clod-hoppers of their own country, longed to behold the prodigy who had stalked between the stilts of the plough in moods of tenderest or loftiest

inspiration; and it is pleasing to think that the poet was not seldom made happy by such visitors—that they carried back with them to their own noblest land a still deeper impression of the exalted worth of the genius of Caledonia. Nor did the gold coin of the genius of Burns sustain any depreciation during his lifetime in his own country. He had that to comfort him—that to glory in till the last; and in his sorest poverty, it must have been his exceeding great reward. Ebenezer Elliott has nobly expressed that belief, and coupled with it—as we have often done—the best vindication of Scotland,—

> "But shall it of our sires be told
> That they their brother poor forsook?
> No! for they gave him more than gold;
> They read the Brave Man's Book."

What happens during their life—more or less—to all eminent men, happened to Burns. Thinking on such things, one sometimes cannot help believing that man hates to honour man, till the power in which miracles have been wrought is extinguished or withdrawn—and then, when jealousy, envy, and all uncharitableness of necessity cease, we confess its grandeur, bow down to it, and worship it. But who were they who in his own country continued most steadfastly to honour his genius and himself—all through what have been called—truly in some respects, falsely in others—his dark days in Dumfries—and on to his death? Not Lords and Earls, not lawyers and wits, not philosophers and doctors—though among the nobility and gentry, among the classes of leisure and of learning, he had friends who wished him well, and were not indisposed to serve him; not the male generation of critics—not the literary prigs epicene—not of decided sex the blues celestial—though many periods were rounded among them upon the Ayrshire ploughman; but the Men of his own Order, with their wives and daughters—shepherds, and herdsmen, and ploughmen—delvers and ditchers—hewers of wood and drawers of water—soldiers and sailors—whether regulars, militia, fencibles, volunteers—on board king's or merchant's ship "far far at sea" or dirt gabbert—within a few yards of the land on either side of the Clyde or the Cart—the Working People—whatever the instruments of their toil—they patronised Burns then—they patronise him now—they would not have hurt a hair of his head—they will not

hear of any dishonour to his dust—they know well what it is to endure, to yield, to enjoy, and to suffer—and the memory of their own bard will be hallowed for ever among the brotherhood like a religion.

In Dumfries, as in every other considerable town in Scotland—and we might add England—it was then customary, you know, with the respectable inhabitants, to pass a convivial hour or two of an evening in some decent tavern or other—and Burns's *howf* was the Globe, kept by honest Mrs Hyslop, who had a sonsy sister, "Anna wi' the gowden locks," the heroine of what in his fond deceit he thought was the best of all his songs. The worthy townsfolk did not frequent bar, or parlour, or club-room—at least they did not think they did—from a desire for drink; though doubtless they often took a glass more than they intended, nay, sometimes even two; and the prevalence of such a system of social life, for it was no less, must have given rise, with others besides the predisposed, to very hurtful habits. They met to expatiate and confer on state affairs—to read the newspapers—to talk a little scandal—and so forth—and the result was, we have been told, considerable dissipation. The system was not excellent; dangerous to a man whose face was always more than welcome; without whom there was wanting the evening or the morning star. Burns latterly indulged too much in such compotations, and sometimes drank more than was good for him; *but not a man now alive in Dumfries ever saw him intoxicated;* and the survivors all unite in declaring that he cared not whether the stoup were full or empty, so that there were *conversation*—argumentative or declamatory, narrative or anecdotal, grave or gay, satirical or sermonic; nor would any of them have hoped to see the sun rise again in this world, had Burns portentously fallen asleep. They had much better been, one and all of them, even on the soberest nights, at their own firesides, or in their beds, and orgies that seemed moderation itself in a *howf* would have been felt outrageous in a *home*. But the blame, whatever be its amount, must not be heaped on the head of Burns, while not a syllable has ever been said of the same enormities steadily practised for a series of years by the dignitaries of the burgh, who by themselves and friends were opined to have been from youth upwards among the most sober of the child-

ren of Adam. Does anybody suppose that Burns would have addicted himself to any meetings considered disreputable—or that, had he lived now, he would have *frequented* any tavern, except, perhaps, some not unfavoured one in the airy realms of imagination, and built among the clouds?

Malicious people would not have ventured during his lifetime, in underhand and undertoned insinuations, to whisper away Burns's moral character, nor would certain memorialists have been so lavish of their lamentations and regrets over his evil habits, had not his political principles during his later years been such as to render him with many an object of suspicion equivalent, in troubled times, to fear and hatred. A revolution that shook the foundations on which so many old evils and abuses rested, and promised to restore to millions their natural liberties, and by that restoration to benefit all mankind, must have agitated his imagination to a pitch of enthusiasm far beyond the reach of ordinary minds to conceive, who nevertheless thought it no presumption on their part to decide dogmatically on the highest questions in political science, the solution of which, issuing in terrible practice, had upset one of the most ancient, and, as it had been thought, one of the firmest of thrones. No wonder that, with his eager and earnest spirit for ever on his lips, he came to be reputed a Democrat. Dumfries was a Tory Town, and could not tolerate a revolutionary—the term was not in use then—a Radical Exciseman. And to say the truth, the idea must have been not a little alarming to weak nerves, of Burns as a demagogue. With such eyes and such a tongue he would have proved a formidable Man of the People. It is certain that he spoke and wrote rashly and reprehensibly—and deserved a caution from the Board. But not such tyrannical reproof; and perhaps it was about as absurd in the Board to order Burns not to think, as it would have been in him to order it to think, for thinking comes of nature, and not of institution, and 'tis about as difficult to control as to create it. He defended himself boldly, and like a man conscious of harbouring in his bosom no evil wish to the State. "In my defence to their accusations I said, that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain I abjured the idea; that a constitution which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be in every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an un-

tried visionary theory;—that in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne taking an active part, either personally or as an author, in the present business of reform; but that when I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature which boded no good to our glorious constitution, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended." His biographers have had difficulty in forming their opinion as to the effect on Burns's mind of the expression of the Board's sovereign will and displeasure. Scott, without due consideration, thought it so preyed on his peace as to render him desperate—and has said "that from the moment his hopes of promotion were utterly blasted, his tendency to dissipation hurried him precipitately into those excesses which shortened his life." Lockhart, on the authority of Mr Findlater, dissents from that statement—Allan Cunningham thinks it in essentials true, and that Burns's letter to Erskine of Mar "covers the Board of Excise and the British Government of that day with eternal shame." Whatever may have been the effect of those proceedings on Burns's mind, it is certain that the freedom with which he gave utterance to his political opinions and sentiments seriously injured him in the estimation of multitudes of excellent people, who thought them akin to doctrines subversive of all government but that of the mob. Nor till he joined the Dumfries Volunteers, and as their Laureate issued his popular song, that flew over the land like wild-fire, "Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?" was he generally regarded as a loyal subject. For two or three years he had been looked on with evil eyes, and spoken of in evil whispers by too many of the good—and he had himself in no small measure to blame for their false judgment of his character. Here are a few of his lines to "The Tree of Liberty:"

"But vicious folk aye hate to see
The works of virtue thrive, man;
The courtly vermin bann'd the tree,
And grat to see it thrive, man.
King Louis thought to cut it down,
When it was unco sma', man;
For this the watchman crack'd his crown,
Cut aff his head and a', man.

Let Britain boast her hardy oak,
Her poplar and her pine, man,
Auld Britain ance could crack her joke,
And o'er her neighbour shine, man.
But seek the forest round and round,
And soon 'twill be agreed, man,
That sic a tree cannot be found
'Twixt London and the Tweed, man.

Wae worth the loon wha wouldna eat
Sic wholesome dainty cheer, man;
I'd sell my shoon frae aff my feet
To taste sic fruit I swear, man.
Syne let us pray, auld England may
Soon plant this far-famed tree, man;
And blithe we'll sing, and hail the day
That gave us liberty, man."

So sunk in slavery at this time was Scotland, that England could not sleep in her bed till she had set her sister free—and sent down some liberators who narrowly escaped getting hanged by this most ungrateful country. Such "perilous stuff" as the above might have been indited by Palmer, Gerald, or Margarot—how all unworthy of the noble Burns! Of all men then in the world, the author of "The Cottar's Saturday Night" was by nature the least of a Jacobin. We cannot help thinking that, like Byron, he loved at times to astonish dull people by daring things, to see how they looked with their hair on end; and dull people—who are not seldom malignant—taking him at his word, had their revenge in charging him with all manner of profligacy, and fabricating vile stories to his disgrace; there being nothing too gross for the swallow of political rancour.

It is proved by many very strong expressions in his correspondence, that the reproof he received from the Board of Excise sorely troubled him; and no doubt it had an evil influence on public opinion that did not subside till it was feared he was dying, and that ceased for a time only with his death. We have expressed our indignation—our contempt of that tyrannical treatment; and have not withheld our respect, our admiration, from the characteristic manliness with which he repelled the accusations some insidious enemies had secretly sent in to the quarter where they knew fatal injury might be

done to all his prospects in life. But was it possible that his most unguarded, rash, and we do not for a moment hesitate to say, blamable expression of political opinions adverse to those maintained by all men friendly to the government, could be permitted to pass without notice? He had no right to encourage what the government sought to put down, while he was "their servant in a very humble department;" and though he successfully repelled the slanders of the despicable creatures who strove to destroy him, even in his high-spirited letter to Erskine there is enough to show that he had entered into such an expostulation with the Board as must have excited strong displeasure and disapproval, which no person of sense, looking back on those most dangerous times, can either wonder at or blame. He says in his defence before the Board, "I stated that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious constitution, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended." From a person in his situation even such a declaration was not prudent, and prudence was a duty; but it is manifest from what he adds for Erskine's own ear, that something more lay concealed in those generalities than the mere words seem to imply. "I have three sons, who I see already have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of SLAVES. Can I look tamely on, and see any machinations to wrest from them the birthright of my boys — the little independent Britons, in whose veins runs my blood? No; I will not, should my heart's blood stream around my attempt to defend it. Does any man tell me that my poor efforts can be of no service, and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the concerns of a nation?" Right or wrong—and we think they were right—the government of the country had resolved to uphold principles, to which the man who could not refrain from thus fiercely declaring himself, at the very time all that was dearest to him was in peril, could not but be held hostile; and so far from its being their duty to overlook such opinions, because they were the opinions of Burns, it was just because they were the opinions of Burns that it was their duty to restrain and reprove them. He continued too long after this to be by far too outspoken—as we have seen; but that his

Scottish soul had in aught become Frenchified, we never shall believe, but while we live shall attribute the obstinacy with which he persisted to sing and say the praises of that people, after they had murdered their King and their Queen, and had been guilty of all enormities, in a great measure to a haughtiness that could not brook to retract opinions he had offensively declared before the faces of many whom not without reason he despised—to a horror of the idea of any sacrifice of that independent spirit which was the very life of his life. Burns had been insulted by those who were at once his superiors and his inferiors, and shall Burns truckle to "the powers that be?"—at any bidding but that of his own conviction swerve a hair's-breadth from his political creed? No: not even though his reason had told him that some of its articles were based in delusion, and if carried into practice among his own countrymen, pursuant to the plots of traitors, who were indeed aliens in soul to the land he loved, would have led to the destruction of that liberty for which he, by the side or at the head of his cottage compatriots, would have gladly died.

The evil consequences of all this to Burns were worse than you may have imagined, for over and above the lies springing up like puddock-stools from domestic middens, an ephemeral brood indeed, but by succession perennial, and that even now, when you grasp them in your hand, spatter vileness in your eyes like so many devil's snuff-boxes—think how injurious to the happiness of such a soul as his, to all its natural habitudes, must have been the feuds carried on all around him, and in which he with his commanding powers too largely mingled, between political parties in a provincial town, contending as they thought, the one for hearths and altars, the other for regeneration of those principles, decayed or dead, which alone make hearths and altars sacred, and their defence worth the tears and the blood of brave men who would fain be free. His sympathy was "wide and general as the casing air;" and not without violence could it be contracted "within the circle none dared tread but they," who thought William Pitt the reproach, and Charles Fox the paragon of animals. Within that circle he met with many good men, the Herons, Millers, Riddells, Maxwells, Symes, and so forth; within it, too, he forgathered with many "a fool and something more." Now, up to "the golden exhalation of the dawn" of his gauger-

ship, Burns had been a Tory, and he heard in "the whisper of a faction" a word unpleasing to a Whiggish ear, turncoat. The charge was false, and he disdained it; but disdain in eyes that, when kindled up, burned like carriage lamps in a dark night, frightened the whispering faction into such animosity that a more than usual sumph produced an avenging epigram upon him and two other traitors, in which the artist committed a mistake of workmanship no subsequent care could rectify: instead of hitting the right nail on the head, why, he hit the wrong nail on the point, so no wooden mallet could drive it home. From how much social pleasure must not Burns have thus been wilfully self-debarred! From how many happy friendships! By nature he was not vindictive, yet occasionally he seemed to be so, visiting slight offence with severe punishment, sometimes imagining offence when there was none, and in a few instances, we fear, satirising in savage verses not only the innocent, but the virtuous; the very beings whom, had he but known them as he might, he would have loved and revered—celebrated them living or dead in odes, elegies, and hymns—thereby doing holy service to goodness, in holding up shining examples to all who longed to do well. Most of his intolerant scorn of high rank had the same origin —not in his own nature, which was noble, but in prejudices thus superinduced upon it which in their virulence were mean —though his genius could clothe them in magnificent diction, and so justify them to the proud poet's heart.

It is seldom indeed that Lockhart misses the mark; but in one instance—an anecdote—where it is intended to present the pathetic, our eyes perceive but the picturesque—we allude to the tale told him by Davie Macculloch, son of the Laird of Ardwall.

He told me that he was seldom more grieved than when, riding into Dumfries one fine summer's evening to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite part was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognise him. The horseman dismounted and joined Burns, who, on his proposing to him to cross the street, said, "Nay, my young friend, that is all over now," and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizell Baillie's pathetic ballad, beginning, "The bonnet stood ance sae fair on his

brow," and ending, "*And werena my heart light I wad die.*" It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He immediately, after citing these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably until the hour of the ball arrived, with a bowl of his usual potation, and bonny Jean's singing of some verses which he had recently composed.

'Tis a pretty picture in the style of Watteau. "The opposite part gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night." What were they about, and where were they going? Were they as yet in their ordinary clothes, colts and fillies alike, taking their exercise preparatory to the country-dances of some thirty or forty couple, that in those days used to try the wind of both sexes? If so, they might have chosen better training-ground along the banks of the Nith. Were they all in full fig, the females with feathers on their heads, the males with *chapeaux bras*—"stepping westward" arm in arm, in successive groups, to the Assembly-room? In whichever of these two pleasant predicaments they were placed, it showed rare perspicacity in Dainty Davie to discern that not one of them appeared willing to recognise Burns—more especially as he was walking on the other and shady side of the street, and Davie on horseback. By what secret signs did the fair freemasons—for such there be—express to their mounted brother their unwillingness to recognise from the sunshine of their promenade, the gauger walking alone in the shade of his? Was flirtation at so low an ebb in Dumfriess-shire, that the flower of her beaux and belles, "in successive groups, drawn together for the festivities of the night," could find eyes for a disagreeable object so many yards of causeway remote? And if Burns observed that they gave him the cold shoulder—cut him across the street—on what recondite principle of conduct did he continue to walk there, in place of stalking off with a frown to his *Howf?* And is it high Galloway to propose to a friend to cross the street to do the civil "to successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, not one of whom had appeared willing to recognise him?" However, it was gallant under such discouragement to patronise the gauger; and we trust that the "wicked wee bowl," while it detained from, and disinclined to, did not incapacitate for the ball.

But whence all those expressions so frequent in his correspondence, and not rare in his poetry, of self-reproach and rueful remorse? From a source that lay deeper than our eyes can reach. We know his worst sins, but cannot know his sorrows. The war between the spirit and the flesh often raged in his nature—as in that of the best of beings who are made—and no Christian, without humblest self-abasement, will ever read his Confessions.

"Is there a whim-inspired fool,
Owre fast for thocht, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
Let him draw near,
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng,
O, pass not by!
But with a frater-feeling strong,
Here, heave a sigh.

Is there a man, whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs himself life's mad career,
Wild as the wave;
Here pause—and, through the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stained his name!

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious, self-control,
Is wisdom's root."

A Bard's Epitaph! Such his character drawn by himself in deepest despondency—in distraction—in despair calmed

while he was composing it by the tranquillising power that ever accompanies the action of genius. And shall we judge him as severely as he judged himself, and think worse of him than of common men, because he has immortalised his frailties in his contrition? The sins of common men are not remembered in their epitaphs. Silence is a privilege of the grave few seek to disturb. If there must be no eulogium, our name and age suffice for that stone; and whatever may have been thought of us, there are some to drop a tear on our forlorn "hic jacet." Burns wrote those lines in the very prime of youthful manhood. You know what produced them—his miserable attachment to her who became his wife. He was then indeed most miserable—afterwards most happy; he cared not then though he should die—all his other offences rose against him in that agony; and how humbly he speaks of his high endowments, under a sense of the sins by which they had been debased! He repented, and sinned again and again; for his repentance—though sincere—was not permanent; yet who shall say that it was not accepted at last? "Owre this grassy heap sing dool, and drap a tear," is an injunction that has been obeyed by many a pitying heart. Yet a little while, and his Jean buried him in such a grave. A few years more, and a mausoleum was erected by the nation for his honoured dust. Now husband and wife lie side by side—"in hopes of a joyful resurrection."

Burns belonged to that order of prevailing poets, with whom "all thoughts, all passions, all delights" possess not that entire satisfaction nature intends, till they effuse themselves abroad, for sake of the sympathy that binds them, even in uttermost solitude, to the brotherhood of man. No secrets have they that words can reveal. They desire that the whole race shall see their very souls—shall hear the very beatings of their hearts. Thus they hope to live for ever in kindred bosoms. They feel that a great power is given them in their miseries—for what miseries has any man ever harboured in the recesses of his spirit, that he has not shared, and will share, with "numbers without number numberless" till the Judgment Day!

Who reads unmoved such sentences as these? "The fates and characters of the rhyming tribe often employ my thoughts when I am disposed to be melancholy. There is not, among

all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so woeful a narrative as the lives of the Poets. In the comparative view of wretches, the question is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear!" Long before the light of heaven had ever been darkened or obscured in his conscience by evil thoughts or evil deeds, when the bold bright boy, with his thick black clustering hair ennobling his ample forehead, was slaving for his parents' sakes—Robert used often to lie by Gilbert's side all night long without ever closing an eye in sleep; for that large heart of his, that loved all his eyes looked upon of nature's works living or dead, perfect as was its mechanism for the play of all lofty passions, would get suddenly disarranged, as if approached the very hour of death. Who will say that many more years were likely to have fallen to the lot of one so framed, had he all life long drunk, as in youth, but of the well-water—"lain down with the dove, and risen with the lark?" If excesses, in which there was vice and therefore blame, did injure his health, how far more those other excesses in which there was so much virtue, and on which there should be praise for ever! Over-anxious, over-working hours beneath the mid-day sun, and sometimes too, to save a scanty crop, beneath the midnight moon, to which he looked up without knowing it with a poet's eyes, as he kept forking the sheaves on the high laden cart that "Hesperus, who led the starry host" beheld crashing into the barnyard among shouts of "Harvest Home."

It has been thought that there are not a few prominent points of character common to Burns and Byron; and though no formal comparison between them has been drawn that we know of, nor would it be worth while attempting it, as not much would come of it, we suspect, without violent stretching and bending of materials, and that free play of fancy which makes no bones of facts, still there is this resemblance, that they both give unreserved expositions of their most secret feelings, undeterred by any fear of offending others, or of bringing censure on themselves by such revelations of the inner man. Byron as a moral being was below Burns; and there is too often much affectation and insincerity in his Confessions. "Fare thee well, and if for ever, still for ever fare thee well," is not elegiac, but satirical; a complaint in which the bitterness is not of grief, but of gall; how unlike "The Lament on the

unfortunate issue of a Friend's Amour," overflowing with the expression of every passion cognate with love's despair! Do not be starled by our asking you to think for a little while of Robert Burns along with—Samuel Johnson. Listen to him, and you hear as wise and good a man as earth ever saw for ever reproaching himself with his wickedness: "from almost the earliest time he could remember he had been forming schemes for a better life." Select from his notes, prayers, and diaries, and from the authentic records of his oral discourse, all acknowledgments of his evil thoughts, practices, and habits—all charges brought against him by conscience, of sins of omission and commission—all declarations, exclamations, and interjections of agonising remorse and gloomy despair—from *them* write his character in his epitaph—and look *there* on the Christian Sage! God forbid that saving truths should be so changed into destroying falsehoods. Slothful—selfish—sensual—envious—uncharitable—undutiful to his parents—thoughtless of Him who died to save sinners—and living without God in the world;—*That* is the wretched being named Samuel Johnson—in the eyes of his idolatrous countrymen only a little lower than the angels—in his own a worm! Slothful! yet how various his knowledge! acquired by fits and snatches—book in hand, and poring as if nearly sand-blind—yet with eyes in their own range of vision keen as the lynx's or the eagle's—on pages no better than blanks to common minds, to his hieroglyphical of wisest secrets—or in long assiduity of continuous studies, of which a month to him availed more than to you or us a year—or all we have had of life.—Selfish! with obscure people, about whom nobody cared, provided for out of his slender means within doors, paupers though they thought it not, and though meanly endowed by nature as by fortune, admitted into the friendship of a Sage simple as a child—out of doors, pensioners waiting for him at the corners of streets, of whom he knew little, but that they were hungry and wanted bread, and probably had been brought by sin to sorrow.—Sensual! Because his big body, getting old, "needed repairs," and because though "*Rasselas Prince of Abyssinia*" had been written on an empty stomach, which happened when he was comparatively young and could not help it, now that he had reached his grand climacteric, he

was determined to show not to the whole world, but to large parties, that all the fat of the earth was not meant for the mouths of blockheads.—Envious! of David Garrick? Poh! poh! Pshaw! pshaw!—Uncharitable? We have disposed of that clause of the verse in our commentary on "selfish."—Undutiful to his parents! He did all man could to support his mother—and having once disobliged his father by sulkily refusing to assist at his book-stall, half a century afterwards, more or less, when at the head of English literature, and the friend of Burke and Beauclerk, he stood bare-headed for an hour in the rain on the site of said book-stall, in the market-place of Lichfield, in penance for that great sin. As to the last two charges in the indictment—if he was not a Christian, who can hope for salvation in the Cross?—If his life was that of an atheist, who of woman born ever walked with God? Yet it is true he was a great sinner. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Burns died in his thirty-eighth year. At that age what had Johnson done to be for ever remembered? He had written *Irene*, *London*, and the *Life of Savage*. Of *Irene* the world makes little account—it contains many just and noble sentiments—but it is a Tragedy without tears. The *Life* is an eloquent lie, told in the delusion of a friendship sealed by participated sorrows. *London* is a satire of the true moral vein—more sincerely indignant with the vices it withers than its prototype in Juvenal—with all the vigour, without any of the coarseness of Dryden—with "the pointed propriety of Pope," and versification almost as musical as his, while not so monotonous—an immortal strain. But had he died in 1747, how slight had been our knowledge—our interest how dull—in the *Life and Writings of Samuel Johnson!* How slight our knowledge! We should never have known that in childhood he showed symptoms "of that jealous independence of spirit and impetuosity of temper which never forsook him"—as Burns in the same season had showed that "stubborn sturdy something in his disposition" which was there to the last;—That he displayed then "that power of memory for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible"—as Burns possessed that faculty—so thought Murdoch—in

more strength than imagination;—That he never joined the other boys in their ordinary diversions, "but would wander away into the fields talking to himself"—like Burns walking miles "to pay his respects to the Leglen wood;"—That when a boy he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry—as Burns was of Blind Harry;—That he fell into "an inattention to religion or an indifference about it in his ninth year," and that after his fourteenth "became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for he did not much *think* about it, and this lasted till he went to Oxford where it would not be *suffered*"—just as the child Burns was remarkable for an "enthusiastic idiot piety," and had pleasure during some years of his youth in puzzling his companions on points in divinity, till he saw his folly, and without getting his mouth shut, was mute;—That on his return home from Stourbridge school in his eighteenth year "he had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day"—like Burns, who, when a year or two older, in his perplexity writes to his father that he knows not what to do, and is sick of life;—That his love of literature was excited by accidentally finding a folio Petrarch—as Burns's love of poetry was by an octavo Shenstone;—That he thereon became a gluttonous book-devourer—as Burns did—"no book being so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches;"—That in his twentieth year he felt himself "overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience, and with a dejection, gloom, and depair which rendered existence misery"—as Burns tells us he was afflicted, even earlier—and to the last—"with a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly to solitude"—with horrid flutterings and stoppages of the heart that often almost choked him, so that he had to fall out of bed into a tub of water to allay the anguish;—That he was at Pembroke College "caressed and loved by all about him as a gay and frolicsome fellow"—while "ah! Sir, I was mad and violent—it was bitterness which they mistook for frolic"—just as Burns was thought to be "with his strong appetite for sociality as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark," though when left alone desponding and distracted;—"That he was generally seen lounging at the College gate, with a

circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the College discipline, which in his maturer years he so much extolled" — as Burns was sometimes seen at the door of a Public ridiculing the candles of the Auld Light, and even spiriting the callants against the Kirk itself, which we trust he looked on more kindly in future years ;—That he had to quit college on his father's bankruptcy, soon followed by death—as Burns in similar circumstances had to quit Lochlea ;—"That in the forlorn state of his circumstances, *Ætat.* 23, he accepted of an offer to be employed as usher in the school of Market-Bosworth," where he was miserable—just as Burns was at the same age, not indeed flogging boys, but flailing barns, "a poor insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, and stalking up and down fairs and markets ;" — That soon after "he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin Poems of Politian at two shillings and sixpence, but that there were not subscribers enough to secure a sufficient sale, so the work never appeared, and probably never was executed"—as Burns soon after issued proposals for printing by subscription, on terms rather higher, "among others the 'Ordination,' 'Scotch Drink,' 'the Cottar's Saturday Night,' and an 'Address to the Deil,'" which volume ere long was published accordingly and had a great sale ; —That he had, "from early youth, been sensible to the influence of female charms, and when at Stourbridge school was much enamoured of Olivia Lloyd, a young Quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses"—just as Burns was—and did—in the case of Margaret Thomson, in the kail-yard at Kirkoswald, and of many others ;—That "his juvenile attachments to the fair sex were however very transient, and it is certain that he formed no criminal connection whatever ; Mr Hector, who lived with him in the utmost intimacy and social freedom, having assured me that even at that ardent season his conduct was strictly virtuous in that respect"—just so with Burns, who fell in love with every lass he saw "come wading barefoot all alane," while his brother Gilbert gives us the same assurance of his continence in all his youthful loves ;— That "in a man whom religious education has saved from licentious indulgences, the passion of love when once it has seized him is exceeding strong, and this was experienced by

Johnson when he became the fervent admirer of Mrs Porter after her first husband's death"—as it was unfortunately too much the case with Burns, though he did not marry a widow double his own age—but one who was a Maid till she met Rob Mossgiel—and some six years younger than himself;—That unable to find subsistence in his native place, or anywhere else, he was driven by want to try his fortune in London, "the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope, and the highest encouragement," on his way thither "riding and tying" with David Garrick—just as Burns was impelled to make an experiment on Edinburgh, journeying thither on foot, but without any companion in his adventure;—That after getting on there indifferently well, he returned "in the course of the next summer to Lichfield, where he had left Mrs Johnson," and staid there three weeks, his mother asking him whether, when in London, "he was one of those who gave the wall or those who took it"—just as Burns returned to Mauchline, where he had left Mrs Burns, and remained in the neighbourhood about the same period of time, his mother having said to him on his return, "Oh, Robert;"—That he took his wife back with him to London, resolving to support her the best way he could, by the cultivation of the fields of literature, and chiefly through an engagement as gauger and supervisor to Cave's Magazine—as Burns, with similar purposes, and not dissimilar means, brought his wife to Ellisland, then to Dumfries;—That partly from necessity, and partly from inclination, he used to perambulate the streets of the city at all hours of the night, and was far from being prim or precise in his company, associating much with one Savage at least who had rubbed shoulders with the gallows—just as Burns on Jenny Geddes and her successor kept skirring the country at all hours, though we do not hear of any of his companions having been stabbers in brothel-brawls;—That on the publication of his "London," that city rang with applause, and Pope pronounced the author—yet anonymous—a true poet, who would soon be *deterré*, while General Oglethorpe became his patron, and such a prodigious sensation did his genius make, that, in the fulness of his fame, Earl Gower did what he could to set him on the way of being elevated to a schoolmastership in some small village in Shropshire or Staffordshire, "of which the

certain salary was *sixty pounds a-year, which would make him happy for life"*—so said English Earl Gower to an Irish Dean called Jonathan Swift—just as Burns, soon after the publication of "Tam o' Shanter," was in great favour with Captain Grose—though there was then no need for any poet to tell the world he was one, as he had been *deterré* a year or two before, and by the unexampled exertions of Graham of Fintry, the Earl of Glencairn being oblivious or dead, was translated to the diocese of Dumfries, where he died in the thirty-eighth year of his age; the very year, we believe, of *his*, in which Johnson issued the prospectus of his Dictionary;—and here we leave the Lexicographer for a moment to himself, and let our mind again be occupied for a moment exclusively by the Exciseman.

You will not suppose that we seriously insist on this parallel, as if the lines throughout ran straight; or that we are not well aware that there was far from being in reality such complete correspondence of the circumstances—much less the characters of the men. But both had to struggle for their very lives—it was sink or swim—and by their own buoyancy they were borne up. In Johnson's case, there is not one dark stain on the story of all those melancholy and memorable years. Hawkins, indeed, more than insinuates that there was a separation between him and his wife, at the time he associated with Savage, and used with that profligate to stroll the streets; and that she was "harboured by a friend near the Tower;" but Croker justly remarks—"that there never has existed any human being, all the details of whose life, all the motives of whose actions, all the thoughts of whose mind, have been so unreservedly brought before the public; even his prayers, his most secret meditations, and his most scrupulous self-reproaches, have been laid before the world; and there is not to be found, in all the unparalleled information thus laid before us, a single trace to justify the accusation which Hawkins so wantonly and so odiously, and it may be assumed, so falsely makes." However, he walked in the midst of evil—he was familiar with the faces of the wicked—the guilty, as they were passing by, he did not always shun, as if they were lepers; he had a word for them—poor as he was, a small coin—for they were of the unfortunate and forlorn, and his heart was pitiful. So was that of Burns. Very many years Heaven

allotted to the Sage, that virtue might be instructed by wisdom—all the good acknowledge that he is great—and his memory is hallowed for evermore in the gratitude of Christendom. In his prime it pleased God to cut off the Poet—but his genius too has left a blessing to his own people—and has diffused noble thoughts, generous sentiments, and tender feelings over many lands, and most of all among them who more especially feel that they are his brethren, the Poor who make the Rich, and like him are happy, in spite of its hardships, in their own condition. Let the imperfections of his character then be spared, if it be even for sake of his genius; on higher grounds let it be honoured; for if there was much weakness, its strength was mighty, and his *religious* country is privileged to forget his frailties, in humble trust that they are forgiven.

We have said but little hitherto of Burns's religion. Some have denied that he had any religion at all—a rash and cruel denial—made in face of his genius, his character, and his life. What man in his senses ever lived without religion? "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"—was Burns an atheist? We do not fear to say that he was religious far beyond the common run of men, even them who may have had a more consistent and better considered creed. The lessons he received in the "auld clay biggin" were not forgotten through life. He speaks—and we believe him—of his "early ingrained piety" having been long remembered to good purpose—what he called his "idiot piety"—not meaning thereby to disparage it, but merely that it was in childhood an instinct. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name!" is breathed from the lips of infancy with the same feeling at its heart that beats towards its father on earth, as it kneels in prayer by his side. No one surely will doubt his sincerity when he writes from Irvine to his father—"Honor'd sir, I am quite transported at the thought, that ere long, perhaps soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it, and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it. It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelation, than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me, for all that this world

has to offer. '15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'" When he gives lessons to a young man for his conduct in life, one of them is, "The great Creator to adore;" when he consoles a friend on the death of a relative, "he points the brimful grief-worn eyes to scenes beyond the grave;" when he expresses benevolence to a distressed family, he beseeches the aid of Him "who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb;" when he feels the need of aid to control his passions, he implores that of the "Great Governor of all below;" when in sickness, he has a prayer for the pardon of his errors, and an expression of confidence in the goodness of God; when suffering from the ills of life, he asks for the grace of resignation, "because they are thy will;" when he observes the sufferings of the virtuous, he remembers a rectifying futurity;—he is religious not only when surprised by occasions such as these, but also on set occasions; he had regular worship in his family while at Ellisland—we know not how it was at Dumfries, but we do know that there he catechised his children every Sabbath evening; nay, he does not enter a Druidical circle without a prayer to God.

He viewed the Creator chiefly in his attributes of love, goodness, and mercy. "In proportion as we are wrung with grief, or distracted with anxiety, the ideas of a superintending Deity, an Almighty protector, are doubly dear." Him he never lost sight of or confidence in, even in the depths of his remorse. An avenging God was too seldom in his contemplations—from the little severity in his own character—from a philosophical view of the inscrutable causes of human frailty—and most of all, from a diseased aversion to what was so much the theme of the sour Calvinism around him; but which would have risen up an appalling truth in such a soul as his, had it been habituated to profounder thought on the mysterious corruption of our fallen nature.

Sceptical thoughts as to revealed religion had assailed his mind, while with expanding powers it "communed with the

glorious universe;" and in 1787 he writes from Edinburgh to a Mr James M'Candlish, student in physic, College, Glasgow," who had favoured him with a long argumentative infidel letter: "I, likewise, since you and I were first acquainted, in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured on 'the daring path Spinoza trod;' but experience of the weakness, not the strength of human powers, *made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.*" When at Ellisland he writes to Mrs Dunlop: "My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophisings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth; the soul affianced to her God; the correspondence fixed with heaven; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn;—who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life! No: to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress." And again, next year, from the same place to the same correspondent: "That there is an incomprehensibly Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that he must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery and consequent outward deportment of this creature he has made—these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between vice and virtue, and consequently that I am an accountable creature; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave, must I think be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go farther, and affirm, that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity of His doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though *to appearance* he was himself the obscurest and most illiterate of our species: therefore Jesus was from God." Indeed, all his best letters to Mrs Dunlop are full of the expression of religious feeling and religious faith; though it must be confessed with pain, that he speaks with more confidence in the truth of natural than of revealed religion, and too often lets sentiments

inadvertently escape him, that, taken by themselves, would imply that his religious belief was but a Christianised Theism. Of the immortality of the soul he never expresses any serious doubt, though now and then his expressions, though beautiful, want their usual force, as if he felt the inadequacy of the human mind to the magnitude of the theme. "Ye venerable sages, and holy flamens, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories, of another world beyond death; or are they all alike baseless visions and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the amiable, and the humane. What a flattering idea this of the world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it as I ardently wish it."

How, then, could honoured Thomas Carlyle bring himself to affirm "that Burns had no religion?" His religion was in much imperfect—but its incompleteness you discern only in a survey of all his effusions, and by inference; for his particular expressions of a religious kind are genuine, and as acknowledgments of the superabundant goodness and greatness of God, they are in unison with the sentiments of the devoutest Christian. But remorse never suggests to him the inevitable corruption of man; Christian humility he too seldom dwells on, though without it there cannot be Christian faith; and he is silent on the need of reconcilement between the divine attributes of Justice and Mercy. The absence of all this might pass unnoticed, were not the religious sentiment so prevalent in his confidential communications with his friends in his most serious and solemn moods. In them there is frequent, habitual recognition of the Creator; and who that finds joy and beauty in nature has not the same? It may be well supposed that if common men are more ideal in religion than in other things, so would be Burns. He who lent the colours of his fancy to common things, would not withhold them from divine. Something—he knew not what—he would exact of man—more impressively reverential than anything he is wont to offer to God, or perhaps can offer in the way of institution—in temples made with hands. The *heartfelt* adoration always has a grace for him—in the silent bosom—in the lonely cottage—in any place where circumstances are a pledge of its reality; but the moment it ceases to be *heartfelt*, and visibly so, it loses his respect, it seems as profanation.

"Mine is the religion of the breast;" and if it be not, what is it worth? But it must also revive a right spirit within us; and there may be gratitude for goodness without such change as is required of us in the gospel. He was too buoyant with immortal spirit within him, not to credit its immortal destination; he was too thoughtful in his human love not to feel how different must be our affections if they are towards flowers which the blast of death may wither, or towards spirits which are but beginning to live in our sight, and are gathering good and evil here for an eternal life. Burns believed that by his own unassisted understanding, and his own unassisted heart, he saw and felt those great truths, forgetful of this great truth, that he had been taught them in the Written Word. Had all he learned in the "auld clay biggin" become a blank—all the knowledge inspired into his heart during the evenings, when "the sire turned o'er, wi' patriarchal grace, the big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride," how little or how much would he then have known of God and Immortality? In that delusion he shared more or less with one and all—whether poets or philosophers—who have put their trust in natural Theology. As to the glooms in which his sceptical reason had been involved, they do not seem to have been so thick—so dense—as in the case of men without number who have by the blessing of God become true Christians. Of his levities on certain celebrations of religious rites, we before ventured an explanation; and while it is to be lamented that he did not more frequently dedicate the genius that shed so holy a lustre over "The Cottar's Saturday Night," to the service of religion, let it be remembered how few poets have done so—alas! too few—that he, like his tuneful brethren, must often have been deterred by a sense of his own unworthiness from approaching its awful mysteries—and above all, that he was called to his account before he had attained his thoughtful prime.

And now that we are approaching the close of our Memoir, it may be well for a little while clearly to consider Burns's position in this world of ours, where we humans often find ourselves, we cannot tell how, in strange positions; and where there are on all hands so many unintelligible things going on, that in all languages an active existence is assumed of such powers as Chance, Fortune, and Fate. Was he more unhappy than the generality of gifted men? In what did that un-

happiness consist? How far was it owing to himself or others?

We have seen that up to early manhood his life was virtuous, and therefore must have been happy—that by magnanimously enduring a hard lot, he made it veritably a light one—and that though subject "to a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made him fly to solitude," he enjoyed the society of his own humble sphere with proportionate enthusiasm, and even then derived deep delight from his genius. That genius quickly waxed strong, and very suddenly he was in full power as a poet. No sooner was passion indulged than it prevailed—and he who had so often felt during his abstinent sore-toiled youth that "a blink of rest's a sweet enjoyment," had now often to rue the self-brought trouble that banishes rest even from the bed of labour, whose sleep would otherwise be without a dream. "I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society, or the vagaries of the Muse." These agonies had a well-known particular cause, but his errors were frequent, and to his own eyes flagrant—yet he was no irreligious person—and exclaimed: "Oh! thou great, unknown Power! thou Almighty God! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality! I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me." What signified it to him that he was then very poor? The worst evils of poverty are moral evils, and them he then knew not; nay, in that school he was trained to many virtues, which might not have been so conspicuous even in his noble nature, but for that severest nurture. Shall we ask, what signified it to him that he was very poor to the last? Alas! it signified much; for when a poor man becomes a husband and a father, a new heart is created within him, and he often finds himself trembling in fits of unendurable, because unavailing fears. Of such anxieties Burns suffered much; yet better men than Burns — better because sober and more religious — have suffered far more; nor in their humility and resignation did

they say even unto themselves "that God had given their share." His worst sufferings had their source in a region impenetrable to the visitations of mere worldly calamities; and might have been even more direful, had his life basked in the beams of fortune, in place of being chilled in its shade. "My mind my kingdom is"—few men have had better title to make that boast than Burns; but sometimes raged there *plus quam civilia bella*—and on the rebellious passions, no longer subjects, at times it seemed as if he cared not to impose peace.

Why, then, such clamour about his condition—such outcry about his circumstances—such horror of his Excisemanship? Why should Scotland, on whose "brow shame is ashamed to sit," hang down her head when bethinking her of how she treated him? Hers the glory of having *produced him;* where lies the blame of his penury, his soul's trouble, his living body's emaciation, its untimely death?

His country cried, "All hail, mine own inspired Bard!" and his heart was in heaven. But heaven on earth is a mid-region not unvisited by storms. Divine indeed must be the descending light, but the ascending gloom may be dismal; in imagination's airy realms the Poet cannot forget he is a Man—his passions pursue him thither—and "that mystical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to them than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours." The primeval curse is felt through all the regions of being; and he who, in the desire of fame having merged all other desires, finds himself on a sudden in its blaze, is disappointed of his spirit's corresponding transport, without which it is but a glare; and remembering the sweet calm of his obscurity, when it was enlivened, not disturbed by soaring aspirations, would fain fly back to its secluded shades, and be again his own lowly natural self in the privacy of his own humble birth-place. Something of this kind happened to Burns. He was soon sick of the dust and din that attended him on his illumined path; and felt that he had been happier at Mossgiel than he ever was in the Metropolis—when, but to relieve his heart of its pathos, he sung in the solitary field to the mountain daisy, than when, to win applause, on the crowded street he chanted in ambitious strains—

"Edina! Scotia's darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once beneath a monarch's feet
Sat legislation's sov'reign powers!
From marking wildly scatter'd flow'rs,
As on the banks of Ayr I stray'd,
And singing, lone, the lingering hours,
I shelter in thy honour'd shade."

He returned to his natural condition when he settled at Ellisland. Nor can we see what some have seen, any strong desire in him after preferment to a higher sphere. Such thoughts sometimes must have entered his mind, but they found no permanent dwelling there; and he fell back, not only without pain, but with more than pleasure, on all the remembrances of his humble life. He resolved to pursue it in the same scenes, and the same occupations, and to continue to be what he had always been—a Farmer.

And why should the Caledonian Hunt have wished to divert or prevent him? Why should Scotland? What patronage, pray tell us, ought the Million and Two Thirds to have bestowed on their poet? With five hundred pounds in the pockets of his buckskin breeches, perhaps he was about as rich as yourself—and then he had a mine—which we hope you have too—in his brain. Something no doubt *might* have been done for him, and if you insist that something *should*, we are not in the humour of argumentation, and shall merely observe that the opportunities to serve him were somewhat narrowed by the want of special preparation for any profession; but supposing that nobody thought of promoting him, it was simply because everybody was thinking of getting promoted himself; and though selfishness is very odious, not more so surely in Scotsmen than in other people, except indeed that more is expected from them on account of their superior intelligence and virtue.

Burns's great calling here below was to illustrate the peasant life of Scotland. Ages may pass without another arising fit for that task; meanwhile the whole pageant of Scottish life has passed away without a record. Let him remain, therefore, in the place which best fits him for the task, though it may not be the best for his personal comfort. If an individual can

serve his country at the expense of his comfort, he *must*, and others should not hinder him; if self-sacrifice is required of him, they must not be blamed for permitting it. Burns followed his calling to the last, with more lets and hindrances than the friends of humanity could have wished; but with a power that might have been weakened by his removal from what he loved and gloried in—by the disruption of his heart from its habits, and the breaking up of that custom which with many men becomes second nature, but which with him was corroboration and sanctification of the first, both being but one agency—its products how beautiful! Like the flower and fruit of a tree that grows well only in its own soil, and by its own river.

But a *Gauger!* What do we say to that? Was it not most unworthy? We ask, unworthy what? You answer, his genius. But who expects the employments by which men live to be entirely worthy of their genius—congenial with their dispositions—suited to the structure of their souls? It sometimes happens—but far oftener not—rarely in the case of poets—and most rarely of all in the case of such a poet as Burns. It is a law of nature that the things of the world come by honest industry, and that genius is its own reward, in the pleasure of its exertions and its applause. But who made Burns a gauger? Himself. It was his own choice. "I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within respecting the excise," he writes to Aiken soon after the Kilmarnock edition. "There are many things plead strongly against it," he adds, but these were all connected with his unfortunate private affairs—to the calling itself he had no repugnance—what he most feared was "the uncertainty of getting soon into business." To Graham of Fintry he writes, a year after the Edinburgh edition: "Ye know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of excise. I have according to form been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in two certificates, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronising friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; *but with anything like business, except manual labour*, I am totally unacquainted. . . I know, Sir, that to need your goodness is to have a claim on

it; may I therefore beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division, where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often distant from my situation." To Miss Chalmers he writes: "You will condemn me for the next step I have taken. I have entered into the excise. I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of fortune's palace we shall enter in, but what door does she open for us? I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation: it is immediate support, and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, it is plenty in comparison of all my preceding life, besides the Commissioners are some of them my acquaintance, and all of them my firm friends." To Dr Moore he writes: "There is still one thing would make me quite easy. I have an excise officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. If I were very sanguine I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a treasury warrant for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c." It is needless to multiply quotations to the same effect. Burns with his usual good sense took into account, in his own estimate of such a calling, not his genius, which had really nothing to do with it, but all his early circumstances, and his present prospects—nor does it seem at any time to have been a source of much discomfort to himself; on the contrary, he looks forward to an increase of its emoluments with hope and satisfaction. We are not now speaking of the disappointment of his hopes of rising in the profession, but of the profession itself. "A supervisor's income varies," he says, in a letter to Heron of that ilk, "from about a hundred and twenty to two hundred a-year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor, I may be nominated on the collector's list; and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A Collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a-year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedency on the list; and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competency, is the summit of my wishes." With such views, Burns became a gauger as well as a farmer—we can see no

degradation in his having done so—no reason why whimpering Cockneys should continually cry "Shame! shame! on Scotland" for having let "Bunns"—as they pronounce him—adopt his own mode of life. Allan Cunningham informs us that the officers of excise on the Nith were then a very superior set of men indeed to those who now ply on the Thames. Burns saw nothing to despise in honest men who did their duty—he could pick and choose among them—and you do not imagine that he was obliged to associate exclusively or intimately with ushers of the rod. Gaugers are gregarious, but not so gregarious as barristers and bagmen. The Club is composed of gauger, shopkeeper, schoolmaster, surgeon, retired merchant, minister, assistant-and-successor, cidevant militia captain, one of the heroes of the Peninsula with a wooden leg, and haply a horse marine. These are the ordinary members; but among the honorary you find men of high degree, squires of some thousands, and baronets of some hundreds a-year. The rise in that department has been sometimes so sudden as to astonish the unexcised. A gauger, of a very few years' standing, has been known, after a quarter's supervisorship, to ascend the collector's, and, ere this planet had performed another revolution round the sun, the Comptroller's chair—from which he might well look down on the Chancellor of England.

Let it not be thought that we are running counter to the common feeling in what we have now been saying, nor blame us for speaking in a tone of levity on a serious subject. We cannot bear to hear people at one hour scorning the distinctions of rank, and acknowledging none but of worth; and at another whining for the sake of worth without rank, and estimating a man's happiness—which is something more than his respectability—by the amount of his income, or according to the calling from which it is derived. Such persons cannot have read Burns. Or do they think that such sentiments as "The rank is but the guinea stamp, the man's the gowd for a' that," are all very fine in verse, but have no place in the prose of life—no application among men of sense to its concerns? But in how many departments have not men to addict themselves almost all their lives to the performance of duties, which, merely as acts or occupations, are in themselves as unintellectual as polishing a pin? Why, a pin-polisher may be a poet—who rounds its head an orator—who sharpens its point

a metaphysician. Wait his time, and you hear the first singing like a nightingale in the autumnal season; the second roaring like a bull, and no mistake; the third, in wandering mazes lost, like a prisoner trying to thread the Cretan labyrinth without his clue. Let a man but have something that he must do or starve, nor be nice about its nature; and be ye under no alarm about the degradation of his soul. Let him even be a tailor—nay, that is carrying the principle too far; but any other handicraft let him for short hours—ten out of the eighteen (six he may sleep) for three-score years and ten assiduously cultivate, or if fate have placed him in a ropery, doggedly pursue; and if nature have given him genius, he will find time to instruct or enchant the world—if but goodness, time to benefit it by his example, "though never heard of half a mile from home."

Who in this country, if you except an occasional statesman, take their places at once in the highest grade of their calling? In the learned professions, what obscurest toil must not the brightest go through! Under what a pressure of mean observances the proudest stoop their heads! The colour-ensign in a black regiment has risen to be colonel in the Rifle-brigade. The middy in a gun-brig on the African station has commanded a three-decker at Trafalgar. Through successive grades they must all go—the armed and the gowned alike; the great law of advancement holds among men of noble and of ignoble birth—not without exceptions indeed in favour of family, and of fortune too, more or less frequent, more or less flagrant—but talent, and integrity, and honour, and learning, and genius, are not often heard complaining of foul play—if you deny it, their triumph is the more glorious, for generally they win the day, and when they have won it—that is, risen in their profession—what becomes of them then? Soldiers or civilians, they must go where they are ordered—in obedience to the same great law; they appeal to their services when insisting on being sent—and in some pestilential climate swift death benumbs

> "Hands that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
> Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre."

It is drudgery to sit six, or eight, or ten hours a-day as a clerk in the India House; but Charles Lamb endured

it for forty years, not without much headache and heart-ache too, we dare say; but Elia shows us how the unwearied flame of genius can please itself by playing in the thickest gloom—how fancy can people dreariest vacancy with rarest creatures holding communion in quaintest converse with the finest feelings of the thoughtful heart—how eyes dim with poring all day on a ledger, can glisten through the evening, and far on into the night, with those alternate visitings of humour and of pathos that for a while come and go as if from regions in the spirit separate and apart, but ere long by their quiet blending persuade us to believe that their sources are close adjacent, and that the streams, when left to themselves, often love to unite their courses, and to flow on together with merry or melancholy music, just as we choose to think it, as smiles may be the order of the hour, or as we may be commanded by the touch of some unknown power within us to indulge the luxury of tears.

Why, then, we ask again, such lamentation for the fate of Burns? Why should not he have been left to make his own way in life like other men gifted or ungifted? A man of great genius in the prime of life is poor. But his poverty did not for any long time necessarily affect the welfare or even comfort of the poet, and therefore created no obligation on his country to interfere with his lot. He was born and bred in a humble station; but such as it was, it did not impede his culture, fame, or service to his people, or, rightly considered, his own happiness; let him remain in it, or leave it as he will and can, but there was no obligation on others to take him out of it. He had already risen superior to circumstances—and would do so still; his glory availed much in having conquered them; give him better, and the peculiar species of his glory will depart. Give him better, and it may be, that he achieves no more glory of any kind; for nothing is more uncertain than the effects of circumstances on character. Some men, we know, are specially adapted to adverse circumstances, rising thereby as the kite rises to the adverse breeze, and falling when the adversity ceases. Such was probably Burns's nature—his genius being piqued to activity by the contradictions of his fortune.

Suppose that some generous rich man had accidentally become acquainted with the lad Robert Burns, and grieving to

think that such a mind should continue boorish among boors, had, much to his credit, taken him from the plough, sent him to College, and given him a complete education. Doubtless he would have excelled; for he was "quick to learn, and wise to know." But he would not have been SCOTLAND'S BURNS. The prodigy had not been exhibited of a poet of the first order in that rank of life. It is an instructive spectacle for the world, and let the instruction take effect by the continuance of the spectacle for its natural period. Let the poet work at that calling which is clearly meant for him —he is "native and endued to the element" of his situation —there is no appearance of his being alien or strange to it —he professes proudly that his ambition is to illustrate the very life he exists in—his happiest moments are in doing so —and he is reconciled to it by its being thus blended with the happiest exertions of his genius. We must look at his lot as a whole—from beginning to end—and so looked at, it was not unsuitable, but the reverse; for as to its later afflictions, they were not such as of necessity belonged to it,—were partly owing to himself, partly to others, partly to evil influences peculiar not to his calling, but to the times.

If Burns had not been prematurely cut off, it is not to be doubted that he would have got promotion, either by favour, or in the ordinary course; and had that happened, he would not have had much cause for complaint, nor would he have complained that like other men he had to wait events, and reach competence or affluence by the usual routine. He would, like other men, have then looked back on his narrow circumstances, and their privations, as conditions which, from the first, he knew must precede preferment, and would no more have thought such hardships peculiar to his lot, than the first-lieutenant of a frigate, the rough work he had had to perform, on small pay, and no delicate mess between decks, when he was a mate, though then perhaps a better seaman than the Commodore.

With these sentiments we do not expect that all who honour this Memoir with a perusal will entirely sympathise; but imperfect as it is, we have no fear of its favourable reception by our friends, on the score of its pervading spirit. As to the poor creatures who purse up their unmeaning mouths—trying, too, without the necessary feature, to sport the supercilious —and instead of speaking daggers, pip pins against the

"Scotch"—they are just the very vermin who used to bite Burns, and one would pause for a moment in the middle of a sentence to impale a dozen of them on one's pen, if they happened to crawl across one's paper. But our Southern brethren —the noble English—who may not share these sentiments of ours—will think "more in sorrow than in anger" of Burns's fate, and for his sake will be loth to blame his mother land. They must think with a sigh of their own Bloomfield, and Clare! Our Burns, indeed, was a greater far; but they will call to mind the calamities of their men of genius, of discoverers in science, who advanced the wealth of nations, and died of hunger—of musicians who taught the souls of the people in angelic harmonies to commerce with heaven, and dropt unhonoured into a hole of earth—of painters who glorified the very sunrise and sunset, and were buried in places for a long time obscure as the shadow of oblivion—and surpassing glory and shame of all—

"Of mighty Poets in their misery dead."

We never think of the closing years of Burns's life, without feeling what not many seem to have felt, that much more of their unhappiness is to be attributed to the most mistaken notion he had unfortunately taken up, of there being something degrading in genius *in writing for money*, than perhaps to all other causes put together, certainly far more than to his professional calling, however unsuitable that may have been to a poet. By persisting in a line of conduct pursuant to that persuasion, he kept himself in perpetual poverty; and though it is not possible to blame him severely for such a fault, originating as it did in the generous enthusiasm of the poetical character, a most serious fault it was, and its consequences were most lamentable. So far from being an extravagant man, in the common concerns of life he observed a proper parsimony; and they must have been careless readers indeed, both of his prose and verse, who have taxed him with lending the colours of his genius to set off with a false lustre that profligate profuseness, habitual only with the selfish, and irreconcilable with any steadfast domestic virtue.

"To catch dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by every wile
That's justified by honour:

Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being Independent."

Such was the advice he gave to a young friend in 1786, and in 1789, in a letter to Robert Ainslie, he says: "Your poets, spendthrifts, and other fools of that kidney, pretend, forsooth, to crack their jokes on prudence—but 'tis a squalid vagabond glorying in his rags. Still, imprudence respecting money matters is much more pardonable than imprudence respecting character. I have no objections to prefer prodigality to avarice, in some few instances: but I appeal to your own observation if you have not often met with the same disingenuousness, the same hollow-hearted insincerity, and disintegrative depravity of principle, in the hackneyed victims of profusion, as in the unfeeling children of parsimony." Similar sentiments will recur to every one familiar with his writings all through them till the very end. His very songs are full of them—many of the best impressively preaching in sweetest numbers industry and thrift. So was he privileged to indulge in poetic transports—to picture, without reproach, the genial hours in the poor man's life, alas! but too unfrequent, and therefore to be enjoyed with a lawful revelry, at once obedient to the iron-tongued knell that commands it to cease. So was he justified in scorning the close-fisted niggardliness that forces up one finger after another, as if *chirted* by a screw, and then shows to the pauper a palm with a doit. "Take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves," is an excellent maxim; but we do not look for illustrations of it in poetry; perhaps it is too importunate in prose. Full-grown moralists and political economists, eager to promote the virtue and the wealth of nations, can study it scientifically in Adam Smith—but the boy must have two buttons to his fob and a clasp, who would seek for it in Robert Burns. The bias of poor human nature seems to lean sufficiently to self, and to require something to balance it the other way; what more effectual than the touch of a poet's finger. We cannot relieve every wretch we meet—yet if we "take care of the pennies," how shall the hunger that beseeches us on the street get a bap? If we let "the pounds take care of themselves," how shall we answer to God at the great day of judgment—remembering how often we had let "unpitied

want retire to die"—the white-faced widow pass us unrelieved, in faded weeds that seemed as if they were woven of dust?

In his poetry, Burns taught love and pity; in his life he practised them. Nay, though seldom free from the pressure of poverty, so ignorant was he of the science of duty, that to the very last he was a notorious giver of alms. Many an impostor must have preyed on his meal-girnel at Ellisland; perhaps the old sick sailor was one, who nevertheless repaid several weeks' board and lodging with a cutter one-foot keel, and six pound burthen, which young Bobby Burns—such is this uncertain world—*grat* one Sabbath to see a total wreck far off in the mid-eddies of the mighty Nith. But the idiot who got his dole from the poet's own hand, as often as he chose to come churming up the Vennel, he was no impostor, and though he had lost his wits, retained a sense of gratitude, and returned a blessing in such phrase as they can articulate "whose lives are hidden with God."

How happened it, then, that such a man was so neglectful of his wife and family, as to let their hearts often ache while he was in possession of a productive genius that might so easily have procured for them all the necessaries and conveniences, and some even of the luxuries of life? By the Edinburgh edition of his poems, and the copyright to Creech, he had made a little fortune, and we know how well he used it. From the day of his final settlement with that money-making, story-telling, magisterial bibliopole, who rejoiced for many years in the name of Provost—to the week before his death, his poetry, and that too sorely against his will, brought him in—*ten pounds!* Had he thereby annually earned fifty—what happy faces at that fireside! how different that household! comparatively how calm that troubled life!

All the poetry, by which he was suddenly made so famous, had been written, as you know, without the thought of *money* having so much as flitted across his mind. The delight of embodying in verse the visions of his inspired fancy—of awakening the sympathies of the few rustic auditors in his own narrow circle, whose hearts he well knew throbbed with the same emotions that are dearest to humanity all over the wide world—*that* had been at first all in all to him—the young poet exulting in his power and in the proof of his power—

till as the assurance of his soul in its divine endowment waxed stronger and stronger he beheld his country's muse with the holly-wreath in her hand, and bowed his head to receive the everlasting halo. "And take thou *this* she smiling said"—that smile was as a seal set on his fame for ever—and "in the auld clay biggin" he was happy to the full measure of his large heart's desire. His poems grew up like flowers before his tread—they came out like singing-birds from the thickets—they grew like clouds on the sky—there they were in their beauty, and he hardly knew they were his own—so quiet had been their creation, so like the process of nature among her material loveliness, in the season of spring when life is again evolved out of death, and the renovation seems as if it would never more need the Almighty hand, in that immortal union of earth and heaven.

You will not think these words extravagant, if you have well considered the *ecstasy* in which the spirit of the poet was lifted up above the carking cares of his toilsome life, by the consciousness of the genius that had been given him to idealise it. "My heart rejoiced in Nature's joy" he says, remembering the beautiful happiness of a summer day reposing on the woods; and from that line we know how intimate had been his communion with Nature long before he had indited to her a single lay of love. And still as he wandered among her secret haunts he thought of her poets—with a fearful hope that he might one day be of the number—and most of all of Fergusson and Ramsay, because they belonged to Scotland, were Scottish in all their looks, and all their language, in the very habits of their bodies, and in the very frame of their souls—humble names now indeed compared with his own, but to the end sacred in his generous and grateful bosom; for at "The Farmer's Ingle" his imagination had kindled into the "Cottar's Saturday Night;" in the "Gentle Shepherd" he had seen many a happy sight that had furnished the matter, we had almost said inspired the emotion, of some of his sweetest and most gladsome songs. In his own everyday working world he walked as a man contented with the pleasure arising in his mere human heart; but that world the poet could purify and elevate at will into a celestial sphere, still lightened by Scottish skies, still melodious with Scottish streams, still inhabited by Scottish

life—sweet as reality, dear as truth, yet visionary as fiction's dream, and felt to be in part the work of his own creation. Proudly, therefore, on that poorest soil the peasant poet bade speed the plough—proudly he stooped his shoulders to the sack of corn, itself a cart-load—proudly he swept the scythe that swathed the flowery herbage—proudly he grasped the sickle—but tenderly too he "turned the weeder clips aside, and *spared the symbol dear*."

Well was he entitled to say to his friend Aiken, in the dedicatory stanza of the Cottar's Saturday Night,—

> "My loved, my honour'd, much respected friend!
> No *mercenary* bard his homage pays;
> With honest pride I scorn each selfish end,
> My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise."

All that he hoped to make by the Kilmarnock edition was twenty pounds to carry him to the West Indies, heedless of the yellow fever. At Edinburgh fortune, hand in hand with fame, descended on the bard in a shower of gold; but he had not courted "the smiles of the fickle goddess," and she soon wheeled away with scornful laughter out of his sight for ever and a day. His poetry had been composed in the fields, with not a plack in the pocket of the poet; and we verily believe that he thought no more of the circulating medium than did the poor mouse in whose fate he saw his own—but more unfortunate!

> "Still thou art blest compared wi' *me!*
> The *present* only toucheth thee:
> But och! I backward cast my e'e
> On prospects drear!
> And forward, though I canna see,
> I guess and *fear*."

At Ellisland his colley bore on his collar, "Robert Burns, poet;" and on his removal to Dumfries, we know that he indulged the dream of devoting all his leisure time to poetry—a dream how imperfectly realised! Poor Johnson, an old Edinburgh friend, begged in his poverty help to his "Museum," and Thomson, not even an old Edinburgh acquaintance, in his pride—no ignoble pride—solicited it for his "Collection;" and, fired by the thought of embellishing the body of Scottish song, he spurned the gentle and guarded

proffer of remuneration in money, and set to work as he had done of yore in the spirit of love, assured from sweet experience that inspiration was its own reward. Sell a song!—as well sell a wildflower plucked from a spring-bank at sunrise. The one pervading feeling does indeed expand itself in a song, like a wildflower in the breath and dew of morning, which before was but a bud, and we are touched with a new sense of beauty at the full disclosure. As a song should always be simple, the flower we liken it to is the lily or the violet. The leaves of the lily are white, but it is not a monotonous whiteness—the leaves of the violet, sometimes "dim as the lids of Cytherea's eyes"—for Shakespeare has said so—are, when well and happy, blue as her eyes themselves, while they looked languishingly on Adonis. Yet the exquisite colour seems of different shades in its rarest richness; and even so as lily or violet shiftingly the same, should be a song in its simplicity, variously tinged with fine distinctions of the one colour of that pervading feeling—now brighter, now dimmer, as open and shut the valves of that mystery, the heart. Sell a song! No—no—said Burns—"You shall have hundreds for nothing—and we shall all sail down the stream of time together, now to merry, and now to sorrowful music, and the dwellers on its banks, as we glide by, shall bless us by name, and call us of the Immortals."

It was in this way that Burns was beguiled by the remembrance of the inspirations of his youthful prime, into the belief that it would be absolutely sordid to write songs for money; and thus he continued for years to enrich others by the choicest products of his genius, himself remaining all the while, alas! too poor. The richest man in the town was not more regular in the settlement of his accounts, but sometimes on Saturday nights he had not wherewithal to pay the expenses of the week's subsistence, and had to borrow a pound-note. He was more ready to lend one, and you know he died out of debt. But his family suffered privations it is sad to think of—though to be sure the children were too young to grieve, and soon fell asleep, and Jean was a cheerful creature, strong at heart, and proud of her famous Robin, the Poet of Scotland, whom the whole world admired, but she alone loved, and, so far from ever upbraiding him, welcomed him at all hours to her arms and to her heart. It is all very fine talking about the delight

he enjoyed in the composition of his matchless lyrics, and the restoration of all those faded and broken songs of other ages, burnished by a few touches of his hand to surpassing beauty; but what we lament is, that with the Poet it was not "No song, no supper," but "No supper for any song"—that with an infatuation singular even in the history of the poetic tribe, he adhered to what he had resolved, in the face of distress which, had he chosen it, he could have changed into comfort, and by merely doing as all others did, have secured a competency to his wife and children. Infatuation! It is too strong a word—therefore substitute some other weaker in expression of blame; nay, let it be—if so you will—some gentle term of praise and of pity; for in this most selfish world, 'tis so rare to be of self utterly regardless, that the scorn of pelf may for a moment be thought a virtue, even when indulged to the loss of the tenderly beloved. Yet the great natural affections have their duties superior over all others between man and man; and he who sets them aside, in the generosity or the joy of genius, must frequently feel that by such dereliction he has become amenable to conscience, and in hours when enthusiasm is tamed by reflection, cannot escape the tooth of remorse.

How it would have kindled all his highest powers, to have felt assured that by their exercise in the Poet's own vocation he could not only keep want from his door "with stern alarum banishing sweet sleep," but clothe, lodge, and board "the wife and weans," as sumptuously as if he had been an absolute supervisor! In one article alone was he a man of expensive habits—it was quite a craze with him to have his Jean dressed *genteelly*—for she had a fine figure, and as she stepped along the green, you might have taken the matron for a maid, so light her foot, so animated her bearing, as if care had never imposed any burden on her not ungraceful shoulders heavier than the milk-pail she had learned at Mossgiel to bear on her head. 'Tis said that she was the first in her rank at Dumfries to sport a gingham gown, and Burns's taste in ribbons had been instructed by the rainbow. To such a pitch of extravagance had he carried his craze that, when dressed for church, Mrs Burns, it was conjectured, could not have had on her person much less than the value of two pounds sterling money; and the boys, from their dress and demeanour, you might have

mistaken for a gentleman's sons. Then he resolved they should have the best education going; and the Hon. the Provost, the Bailies, and Town Council, he petitioned thus: "The literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town have so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them; still, to me a stranger, with my large family, and very stinted income, to give my young ones that education I wish, at the high school fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me. Some years ago your good town did me the honour of making me an honorary burgess, will you then allow me to request, that this mark of distinction may extend so far as to put me on a footing of a real freeman in the schools?" Had not "his income been so stinted," we know how he would have spent it.

Then the world—the gracious and grateful world—"wondered and of her wondering found no end," how and why it happened that Burns was publishing no more poems. What was he about? Had his genius deserted him? Was the vein wrought out? of fine ore indeed, but thin, and now there was but rubbish. His contributions to Johnson were not much known, and but some six of his songs in the first half-part of Thomson appeared during his life. But what if he had himself given to the world, through the channel of the regular trade, and for his own behoof, in Parts, or all at once, THOSE TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY SONGS—new and old—original and restored—with all those disquisitions, annotations, and ever so many more, themselves often very poetry indeed—what would the world have felt, thought, said, and done then? She would at least not have believed that the author of "The Cottar's Saturday Night" was—a drunkard. And what would Burns have felt, thought, said, and done then? He would have felt that he was turning his divine gift to a sacred purpose—he would have thought well of himself, and in that just appreciation there would have been peace—he would have said thousands on thousands of high and noble sentiments in discourses and in letters, with an untroubled voice and a steady pen, the sweet persuasive eloquence of the happy—he would have done greater things than it had before entered into his heart to conceive—his drama of "The Bruce" would have come forth magnificent from an imagination elevated by the

joy that was in his heart—his "Scottish Georgics" would have written themselves, and would have been pure Virgilian —"Tale upon Tale," each a day's work or a week's, would have taken the shine out of "Tam o' Shanter."

And here it is incumbent on us to record our sentiments regarding Mr Thomson's conduct towards Burns in his worst extremity, which has not only been assailed by "anonymous scribblers," whom perhaps he may rightly regard with contempt; but as he says in his letter to our esteemed friend, the ingenious and energetic Robert Chambers, to "his great surprise, by some writers who might have been expected to possess sufficient judgment to see the matter in its true light."

In the "melancholy letter received through Mrs Hyslop," as Mr Thomson well calls it, dated April, Burns writes: "Alas, my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time before I tune my lyre again. 'By Babel streams I have sat and wept' almost ever since I wrote you last (in February when he thanked Mr Thomson for 'a handsome elegant present to Mrs B.,'—we believe a worsted shawl). I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time but by the repercussions of pain. Rheumatism, cold, and fever have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope." In his answer to that letter, dated 4th of May, Mr Thomson writes: "I need not tell you, my good Sir, what concern your last gave me, and how much I sympathise in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigour of your constitution I trust will soon set you on your feet again; and *then it is to be hoped you will see the wisdom of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.* Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence, and good spirits, I remain with sincere regard, yours." This is kind as it should be; and the advice given to Burns is good, though perhaps, under the circumstances, it might just as well have been spared. In a subsequent letter without date, Burns writes: "I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout: a sad business." Then comes that

most heart-rending letter, in which the dying Burns in terror of a jail implores the loan of five pounds—and the well-known reply. "Ever since I received your melancholy letter by Mrs Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings," and so on. Shorter rumination than of *three months* might, one would think, have sufficed to mature some plan for the alleviation of such sufferings, and human ingenuity has been more severely taxed than it would have been in devising means to carry it into effect. The recollection of a letter written *three years before*, when the Poet was in high health and spirits, needed not to have stayed his hand. "The fear of offending your independent spirit" seems a bugbear indeed. "With great pleasure I enclose a draft for *the very sum I had proposed sending!!* Would I were CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER but for one day for your sake!!!"

Josiah Walker, however, to whom Mr Thomson gratefully refers, says, "A few days before Burns expired he applied to Mr Thomson for a loan of £5, in a note which showed the irritable and distracted state of his mind, and his commendable judgment instantly remitted the precise sum, foreseeing that had he, at that moment, presumed to exceed that request, he would have exasperated the irritation and resentment of the haughty invalid, and done him more injury, by agitating his passions, than could be repaired by administering more largely to his wants." Haughty invalid! Alas! he was humble enough now. "After all my boasted independence, *stern necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds!*" Call not that a pang of pride. It is the outcry of a wounded spirit shrinking from the last worst arrow of affliction. In one breath he implores succour and forgiveness from the man to whom he had been a benefactor. "*Forgive me* this earnestness—but the horrors of a jail have made me half-distracted. FORGIVE ME! FORGIVE ME!" He asks no gift—he but begs to borrow—and trusts to the genius God had given him for ability to repay the loan; nay, he encloses his *last song*, "Fairest Maid on Devon's Banks," as in part payment! But oh! save Robert Burns from dying in prison. What hauteur! And with so "haughty an invalid" how shall a musical brother deal, so as not "to exasperate his irritation and resentment," and do him "more injury, by agitating his

passions, than could be repaired by administering more largely to his wants?" *More largely!* Faugh! faugh! Foreseeing that he who was half-mad at the horrors of a jail, would go wholly mad were ten pounds sent to him instead of five, which was all "the haughty invalid" had implored, "with commendable judgment," according to Josiah Walker's philosophy of human life, George Thomson sent "the precise sum!" And supposing it had gone into the pocket of the merciless haberdasher, on what did Josiah Walker think would "the haughty invalid" have subsisted *then*—how paid for lodging without board by the melancholy Solway-side?

Mr Thomson's champion proceeds to say—"Burns had all the unmanageable pride of Samuel Johnson, *and if the latter threw away with indignation the new shoes which had been placed at his chamber door, secretly and collectively by his companions*, the former would have been still more ready to resent any pecuniary donation with which a single individual, after his peremptory prohibition, should avowedly have dared to insult him with." In Boswell we read—"Mr Bateman's lectures were so excellent that Johnson used to come and get them at second-hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme, that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that his humiliating condition was perceived by the Christ-Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, *and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door*, he threw them away with indignation." Hall, Master of Pembroke, in a note on this passage, expresses strong doubts of Johnson's poverty at college having been extreme; and Croker, with his usual accuracy, says, "Authoritatively and circumstantially as this story is told, there is good reason for disbelieving it altogether. Taylor was admitted Commoner of Christ-Church, June 27, 1730; Johnson left Oxford six months before." Suppose it true. Had Johnson found the impudent cub in the act of depositing the eleemosynary shoes, he infallibly would have knocked him down with fist or folio as clean as he afterwards did Osborne. But Mr Thomson was no such cub, nor did he stand relatively to Burns in the same position as such cub to Johnson. He owed Burns much money—though Burns would not allow himself to think so; and had he expostulated, with open heart and hand, with the Bard on his obstinate—he

might have kindly said foolish, and worse than foolish disregard, not only of his own interest, but of the comfort of his wife and family—had he gone to Dumfries for the sole purpose—who can doubt that "his justice and generosity" would have been crowned with success? Who but Josiah Walker could have said that Burns would have *then* thought himself insulted? Resent a "pecuniary *donation*" indeed! What is a donation? Johnson tells us, in the words of South: "After donation there is an absolute change and alienation made of the property of the thing given; which being alienated, a man has no more to do with it than with a thing bought with another's money." It was Burns who made a donation to Thomson of a hundred and twenty songs.

All mankind must agree with Mr Lockhart when he says—"Why Burns, who was of opinion, when he wrote his letter to Mr Carfrae, that 'no profits were more honourable than those of the labours of a man of genius,' and whose own notions of independence had sustained no shock in the receipt of hundreds of pounds from Creech, should have spurned the suggestion of pecuniary recompence from Mr Thomson, it is no easy manner to explain; nor do I profess to understand why Mr Thomson took so little pains to argue the matter *in limine* with the poet, and convince him that the time which he himself considered as fairly entitled to be paid for by a common bookseller, ought of right to be valued and acknowledged by the editor and proprietor of a book containing both songs and music." We are not so much blaming the backwardness of Thomson in the matter of the songs, as we are exposing the *blather* of Walker in the story of the shoes. Yet something there is in the nature of the whole transaction that nobody can stomach. We think we have in a great measure explained how it happened that Burns "spurned the suggestion of pecuniary recompence;" and bearing our remarks in mind, look for a moment at the circumstances of the case. Mr Thomson, in his first letter, September 1792, says, "*Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us*, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication." "We shall esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying *any reasonable price* you shall please to demand for it." And would Robert Burns condescend to receive money for his contributions to a work in honour of Scotland,

undertaken by men with whom "profit was quite a secondary consideration?" Impossible. In July 1793, when Burns had been for nine months enthusiastically co-operating in a great national work, and had proved that he would carry it on to a triumphant close, Mr Thomson writes: "I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done. As I shall be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to enclose a small mark of my gratitude, and to repeat it afterwards *when I find it convenient.* Do not return it—for BY HEAVEN if you do, *our correspondence is at an end.*" A bank-note for five pounds! "In the name of the prophet—FIGS!" Burns, with a proper feeling, retained the trifle, but forbade the repetition of it; and everybody must see, at a glance, that such a man could not have done otherwise—for it would have been most degrading indeed had he shown himself ready to accept a five-pound note when it might happen to suit the convenience of an Editor. His domicile was not in Grub Street.

Mr Walker, still further to soothe Mr Thomson's feelings, sent him an extract from a letter of Lord Woodhouselee's: "I am glad that you have embraced the occasion which lay in your way of doing full justice to Mr George Thomson, who I agree with you in thinking, was most harshly and illiberally treated by an anonymous dull calumniator. I have always regarded Mr Thomson as a man of great worth and most respectable character; and I have every reason to believe that poor Burns felt *himself as much indebted to his good counsels and active friendship as a man, as the public is sensible he was to his good taste and judgment as a critic.*" Mr Thomson, in now giving, for the first time, this extract to the public, says: "Of the unbiassed opinion of such a highly respectable gentleman and accomplished writer as Lord Woodhouselee, I certainly feel not a little proud. It is of itself more than sufficient to silence the calumnies by which I have been assailed, first anonymously, and afterwards, to my great surprise, by some writers who might have been expected to possess sufficient judgment to see the matter in its true light." He has reason to feel proud of his Lordship's good opinion, and on the ground of his private character he deserved it. But the assertions contained in the extract have no bearing whatever on the

question, and they are entirely untrue. Lord Woodhouselee could have had no authority for believing "that poor Burns felt himself indebted to Mr Thomson's good counsels and active friendship as a man." Mr Thomson, a person of no influence or account, had it not in his power to exert any "active friendship" for Burns; and as to "good counsels," it is not to be believed for a moment that a modest man like him, who had never interchanged a word with Burns, would have presumed to become his Mentor. This is putting him forward in the high character of Burns's benefactor, not only in his worldly concerns, but in his moral well-being; a position which of himself he never could have dreamt of claiming, and from which he must, on a moment's consideration, with pain inexpressible recoil. Neither is "the public sensible" that Burns was "indebted to his good taste and judgment as a critic." The public kindly regard Mr Thomson, and think that in his correspondence with Burns he makes a respectable figure. But Burns repudiated most of his critical strictures; and the worthy Clerk of the Board of Trustees does indeed frequently fall into sad mistakes, concerning alike poetry, music, and painting. Lord Woodhouselee's "unbiassed opinion," then, so far from being of itself "sufficient to silence the calumnies of ignorant assailants, &c.," is not worth a straw.

Mr Thomson, in his five-pound letter, asks—"Pray, my good sir. is it not possible for you *to muster a volume of poetry?*" Why, with the assistance of Messrs Johnson and Thomson, it would have been possible; and then Burns might have called in his "Jolly Beggars." "If too much trouble to you," continues Mr Thomson, "in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here who would select and arrange your manuscripts, and take upon him the *task of editor*. In the mean time it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour; remember Pope published the *Iliad* by subscription." Why, had not Burns published his own poems by subscription! All this seems the strangest mockery ever heard of; yet there can be no doubt that it was written not only with a serious face, but with a kind heart. But George Thomson at that time was almost as poor a man as Robert Burns. Allan Cunningham, a man of genius and virtue, in his interesting *Life of Burns*, has, in his characteristic straight-

forward style, put the matter—in as far as it regards the money remittance—in its true light, and all Mr Thomson's friends should be thankful to him.

Thomson instantly complied with the request of Burns; he borrowed a five-pound note from Cunningham (a draft), and sent it, saying, he had made up his mind to enclose the identical sum the poet had asked for, when he received his letter. For this he has been sharply censured; and his defence is, that he was afraid of sending more, lest he should offend the pride of the poet, who was uncommonly sensitive in pecuniary matters. A better defence is Thomson's own poverty: only one volume of his splendid work was then published; his outlay had been beyond his means, and very small sums of money had come in to cover his large expenditure. Had he been richer, his defence would have been a difficult matter. When Burns made the stipulation, his hopes were high, and the dread of hunger, or of the jail, was far from his thoughts; he imagined that it became genius to refuse money in a work of national importance. But his situation grew gloomier as he wrote; he had lost nearly his all in Ellisland, and was obliged to borrow small sums, which he found a difficulty in repaying. That he was in poor circumstances was well known to the world; and had money been at Thomson's disposal, a way might have been found of doing the poet good by stealth: he sent five pounds, because he could not send ten, and it would have saved him from some sarcastic remarks, and some pangs of heart, had he said so at once.

Mr Thomson has attempted a defence of himself about once every seven years, but has always made the matter worse, by putting it on wrong grounds. In a letter to that other Arcadian, Josiah Walker, he says—many years ago—"Now, the fact is, that notwithstanding the united labours of all the men of genius who have enriched my Collection, I am not even *yet compensated for the precious time consumed by me in poring over musty volumes, and in corresponding with every amateur and poet, by whose means I expected to make any valuable addition to our national music and song;—for the exertion* and money it cost me to obtain accompaniments from the greatest masters of harmony in Vienna; and for the sums paid to engravers, printers, and others." Let us separate the items of this account. The money laid out by him must stand by itself—and for that outlay, he had then been compensated by the profits of the sale of the Collection. Those profits, we do not doubt, had been much exaggerated by public opinion, but

they had then been considerable, and have since been great. Our undivided attention has therefore to be turned to "his precious time consumed," and to its inadequate compensation. And the first question that naturally occurs to every reader to ask himself is—"in what sense are we to take the terms 'time,' 'precious,' and 'consumed?'" Inasmuch as "time" is only another word for life, it is equally "precious" to all men. Take it then to mean leisure hours, in which men seek for relaxation and enjoyment. Mr Thomson tells us that he was, from early youth, an enthusiast in music and in poetry; and it puzzles us to conceive what he means by talking of "his precious time being consumed" in such studies. To an enthusiast, a "musty volume" is a treasure beyond the wealth of Ind—to pore over "musty volumes" sweet as to gaze on melting eyes—he hugs them to his heart. They are their own exceeding great reward—and we cannot listen to any claim for pecuniary compensation. Then who ever heard, before or since, of an enthusiast in poetry avowing before the world that he had not been sufficiently compensated in money "for the precious time consumed by him in corresponding with Poets?" Poets are proverbially an irritable race; still there is something about them that makes them very engaging—and we cannot bring ourselves to think that George Thomson's "precious time consumed" in corresponding with Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Campbell, Joanna Baillie, and the Ettrick Shepherd, deserved "compensation." As to amateurs, we mournfully grant they are burthensome; yet even that burthen may uncomplainingly be borne by an Editor who "expects by their means to make any valuable addition to our national music and song;" and it cannot be denied that the creatures have often good ears, and turn off tolerable verses. Finally, if by "precious" he means valuable, in a Politico-Economical sense, we do not see how Mr Thomson's time could have been consumed more productively to himself; nor, indeed, how he could have made any money at all by a different employment of it. In every sense, therefore, in which the words are construed, they are equally absurd; and all who read them are forced to think of one whose "precious time was indeed consumed"—to his fatal loss—the too-generous, the self-devoted Burns—but for whose "uncompensated exertions," *The Melodies of Scotland* would have been to the Editor a ruinous

concern, in place of one which for nearly half a century must have been yielding him a greater annual income than the Poet would have enjoyed had he been even a Supervisor.

Mr Thomson has further put forth in his letter to Robert Chambers, and not now for the first time, this most injudicious defence :—

> Had I been a selfish or avaricious man, I had a fair opportunity, upon the death of the poet, to put money in my pocket ; for I might then have published, for my own behoof, all the beautiful lyrics he had written for me, the original manuscripts of which were in my possession. But instead of doing this, I was no sooner informed that the friends of the poet's family had come to a resolution to collect his works, and to publish them for the benefit of the family, and that they thought it of importance to include my MSS. as being likely, from their number, their novelty, and their beauty, to prove an attraction to subscribers, than I felt it my duty to put them at once in possession of all the songs, and of the correspondence between the poet and myself; and accordingly, through Mr John Syme of Ryedale, I transmitted the whole to Dr Currie, who had been prevailed on, immensely to the advantage of Mrs Burns and her children, to take on himself the task of editor. For this surrendering the manuscripts, I received, both verbally and in writing, the warm thanks of the trustees for the family—Mr John Syme and Mr Gilbert Burns—who considered what I had done as a fair return for the poet's generosity of conduct to me.

Of course he retained the exclusive right of publishing the songs with the music in his Collection. Now, what if he had refused to surrender the manuscripts? The whole world would have accused him of robbing the widow and orphan, and he would have been hooted out of Scotland. George Thomson, rather than have done so, would have suffered himself to be pressed to death between two millstones ; and yet he not only instances his having "surrendered the MSS," as a proof of the calumnious nature of the abuse with which he had been assailed by anonymous scribblers, but is proud of the thanks of "the trustees of the family, who considered what I had done as a *fair return* for the poet's generosity of conduct to me." Setting aside, then, "the calumnies of anonymous scribblers," with one and all of which we are unacquainted, we have shown that Josiah Walker, in his foolish remarks on this affair, whereby he outraged the common feelings of humanity, left his friend just

where he stood before—that Lord Woodhouselee knew nothing whatever about the matter, and in his good nature has made assertions absurdly untrue—that Mr Thomson's own defence of himself is in all respects an utter failure, and mainly depends on the supposition of a case unexampled in a Christian land—that Lockhart with unerring finger has indicated where the fault lay—and that Cunningham has accounted for it by a reason that with candid judges must serve to reduce it to one of a very pardonable kind; the avowal of which from the first would have saved a worthy man from some unjust obloquy, and at least as much undeserved commendation—the truth being now apparent to all, that "his poverty, not his will, consented" to secure, on the terms of non-payment, a hundred and twenty songs from the greatest lyrical poet of his country, who during the years he was thus lavishing away the effusions of his matchless genius without fee or reward, was in a state bordering on destitution, and as the pen dropt from his hand, did not leave sufficient to defray the expenses of a decent funeral.

We come now to contemplate his dying days; and mournful as the contemplation is, the close of many an illustrious life has been far more distressing, involved in far thicker darkness, and far heavier storms. From youth he had been visited—we shall not say haunted—by presentiments of an early death; he knew well that the profound melancholy that often settled down upon his whole being, suddenly changing day into night, arose from his organisation;—and it seems as if the finest still bordered on disease—disease in his case perhaps hereditary—for his father was often sadder than even "the toil worn cottar" needed to be, and looked like a man subject to inward trouble. His character was somewhat stern; and we can believe that in its austerity he found a safeguard against passion, that nevertheless may shake the life it cannot wreck. But the son wanted the father's firmness; and in his veins there coursed more impetuous blood. The very fire of genius consumed him, coming and going in fitful flashes; his genius itself may almost be called a passion, so vehement was it, and so turbulent—though it had its scenes of blissful quietude; his heart too seldom suffered itself to be at rest; many a fever travelled through his veins; his calmest nights were liable to be broken in upon by the worst of dreams—

waking dreams from which there is no deliverance in a sudden start—of which the misery is felt to be no delusion—which are not dispelled by the morning light, but accompany their victim as he walks out into the day, and among the dew, and surrounded as he is with the beauty of rejoicing nature, tempt him to curse the day he was born.

Yet let us not call the life of Burns unhappy—nor at its close shut our eyes to the manifold blessings showered by Heaven on the Poet's lot. Many of the mental sufferings that helped most to wear him out, originated in his own restless nature—"by prudent, cautious self-control" he might have subdued some and tempered others—better regulation was within his power—and, like all men, he paid the penalty of neglect of duty, or of its violation. But what loss is hardest to bear? The loss of the beloved. All other wounds are slight to those of the affections. Let fortune do her worst—so that Death be merciful. Burns went to his own grave without having been commanded to look down into another's where all was buried. "I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her." The flower withered, and he wept—but his four pretty boys were soon dancing again in their glee—their mother's heart was soon composed again to cheerfulness—and her face without a shadow. Anxiety for their sakes did indeed keep preying on his heart;—but what would that anxiety have seemed to him, had he been called upon to look back upon it in anguish *because they were not?* Happiness too great for this earth! If in a dream for one short hour restored, that would have been like an hour in heaven.

Burns had not been well for a twelvemonth; and though nobody seems even then to have thought him dying, on the return of spring, which brought him no strength, he knew that his days were numbered. Intense thought, so it be calm, is salutary to life. It is emotion that shortens our days by hurrying life's pulsations—till the heart can no more, and runs down like a disordered time-piece. We said nobody seems to have thought him dying;—yet after the event, everybody, on looking back on it, remembered seeing death in his face. It is when thinking of those many months of decline and decay,

that we feel pity and sorrow for his fate, and that along with them other emotions will arise, without our well knowing towards whom, or by what name they should be called, but partaking of indignation, and shame, and reproach, as if some great wrong had been done, and might have been rectified before death came to close the account. Not without blame somewhere could such a man have been so neglected—so forgotten—so left alone to sicken and die.

> "Oh, Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
> For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent!
> Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
> Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!"

No son of Scotland did ever regard her with more filial affection—did ever in strains so sweet sing of the scenes "that make her loved at home, revered abroad"—and yet his mother stretched not out her hand to sustain—when it was too late to save—her own Poet as he was sinking into an untimely grave. But the dying man complained not of her ingratitude; he loved her too well to the last to suspect her of such sin—there was nothing for him to forgive—and he knew that he would have a place for ever in her memory. Her rulers were occupied with great concerns—in which *all thoughts of self were merged!* and therefore well might they forget her Poet, who was but a cottar's son and a gauger. In such forgetfulness they were what other rulers have been, and will be,—and Coleridge lived to know that the great ones of his own land could be as heartless in his own case as the "Scotch nobility" in that of Burns, for whose brows his youthful genius wove a wreath of scorn. "The rapt one of the godlike forehead, the heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth"—but who among them all cared for the long self-seclusion of the white-headed sage—for his sick-bed or his grave?

Turn we then from the Impersonation named Scotland—from her rulers—from her nobility and gentry—to the personal friends of Burns. Could they have served him in his straits? And how? If they could, then were they bound to do so by a stricter obligation than lay upon any other party; and if they had the will as well as the power, 'twould have been easy to find a way. The duties of friendship are plain, simple, sacred—and to perform them is delightful; yet so far as we

can see, they were not performed here—if they were, let us have the names of the beneficent who visited Burns every other day during the months disease had deprived him of all power to follow his calling? Who insisted on helping to keep the family in comfort till his strength might be restored?—for example, to pay his house rent for a year? Mr Syme of Ryedale told Dr Currie, that Burns had "many firm friends in Dumfries," who would not have suffered the haberdasher to put him into jail, and that his were the fears of a man in delirium. Did not those "firm friends" know that he was of necessity very poor? And did any one of them offer to lend him thirty shillings to pay for his three weeks' lodgings at the Brow? He was not in delirium—till within two days of his death. Small sums he had occasionally borrowed and repaid —but from people as poor as himself—such as kind Craig, the schoolmaster, to whom, at his death, he owed a pound—never from the more opulent townfolk or the gentry in the neighbourhood, of not one of whom is it recorded that he or she accommodated the dying Poet with a loan sufficient to pay for a week's porridge and milk. Let us have no more disgusting palaver about his pride. His heart would have melted within him at any act of considerate friendship done to his family; and so far from feeling that by accepting it he had become a pauper, he would have recognised in the doer of it a brother, and taken him into his heart. And had he not in all the earth, one single such Friend? His brother Gilbert was struggling with severe difficulties at Mossgiel, and was then unable to assist him; and his excellent cousin at Montrose had enough to do to maintain his own family; but as soon as he knew how matters stood, he showed that the true Burns blood was in his heart, and after the Poet's death, was as kind as man could be to his widow and children.

What had come over Mrs Dunlop that she should have seemed to have forgotten or forsaken him? "*These many months* you have been two packets in my debt—what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend I am utterly at a loss to guess. Alas! Madam, ill can I afford, at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. . . . . I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock (the death of his little daughter), when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever,

and long the die spun doubtful; until, after many weeks of a sick-bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once, indeed, have been before my own door in the street." No answer came; and three months after he wrote from the Brow: "Madam—I have written you so often without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that *bourne whence no traveller returns.* Your friendship, with which for many years you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell. R. B." Currie says, "Burns had the pleasure of receiving a satisfactory explanation of his friend's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children; an assurance that has been amply fulfilled." That "satisfactory explanation" should have been given to the world—it should be given yet—for without it such incomprehensible silence must continue to seem cruel; and it is due to the memory of one whom Burns loved and honoured to the last, to vindicate on her part the faithfulness of the friendship which preserves her name.

Maria Riddel, a lady of fine talents and accomplishments, and though somewhat capricious in the consciousness of her mental and personal attractions, yet of most amiable dispositions, and of an affectionate and tender heart, was so little aware of the condition of the Poet, whose genius she could so well appreciate, that only a few weeks before his death, when he could hardly crawl, he had by letter to decline acceding to her "desire, that he would go to the birthday assembly, on the 4th of June, to *show his loyalty!*" Alas! he was fast "wearin awa to the land o' the leal;" and after the lapse of a few weeks, that lady gay, herself in poor health, and saddened out of such vanities by sincerest sorrow, was struck with his appearance on entering the room. "The stamp of death was imprinted on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His first salutation was—'Well, Madam, have you any commands for the next world!'" The best men

have indulged in such sallies on the brink of the grave. Nor has the utterance of words like these, as life's taper was flickering in the socket, been felt to denote a mood of levity unbecoming a creature about to go to his account. On the contrary, there is something very affecting in the application of such formulas of speech as had been of familiar use all his days, on his passage through the shadow of time, now that his being is about to be liberated into the light of eternity, where our mortal language is heard not, and spirit communicates with spirit through organs not made of clay, having dropt the body like a garment.

In that interview, the last recorded, and it is recorded well —pity so much should have been suppressed—" he spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his poor children so young and unprotected, and his wife in so interesting a situation, in hourly expectation of lying in of a fifth." Yet during the whole afternoon he was cheerful, even gay, and disposed for pleasantry; such is the power of the human voice and the human eye over the human heart, almost to the resuscitation of drowned hope, when they are both suffused with affection, when tones are as tender as tears, yet can better hide the pity that ever and anon will be gushing from the lids of grief. He expressed deep contrition for having been betrayed by his inferior nature and vicious sympathy with the dissolute, into impurities in verse, which he knew were floating about among people of loose lives, and might on his death be collected to the hurt of his moral character. Never had Burns been "hired minstrel of voluptuous blandishment," nor by such unguarded freedom of speech had he ever sought to corrupt; but in emulating the ribald wit, and coarse humour of some of the worst old ballants current among the lower orders of the people, of whom the moral and religious are often tolerant of indecencies to a strange degree, he felt that he had sinned against his genius. A miscreant, aware of his poverty, had made him an offer of fifty pounds for a collection, which he repelled with the horror of remorse. Such things can hardly be said to have existence —the polluted perishes—or shovelled aside from the socialities of mirthful men, are nearly obsolete, except among those

whose thoughtlessness is so great as to be sinful, among whom the distinction ceases between the weak and the wicked. From such painful thoughts he turned to his poetry, that had every year been becoming dearer and dearer to the people, and he had comfort in the assurance that it was pure and good; and he wished to live a little longer that he might amend his Songs, for through them he felt he would survive in the hearts of the dwellers in cottage-homes all over Scotland—and in the fond imagination of his heart Scotland to him was all the world.

"He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy," and perhaps without any reference to religion; for dying men often keep their profoundest thoughts to themselves, except in the chamber in which they believe they are about to have the last look of the objects of their earthly love, and there they give them utterance in a few words of hope and trust. While yet walking about in the open air, and visiting their friends, they continue to converse about the things of this life in language so full of animation, that you might think, but for something about their eyes, that they are unconscious of their doom—and so at times they are; for the customary pleasure of social intercourse does not desert them; the sight of others well and happy beguiles them of the mournful knowledge that their own term has nearly expired, and in that oblivion they are cheerful as the persons seem to be who for their sakes assume a smiling aspect in spite of struggling tears. So was it with Burns at the Brow. But he had his Bible with him in his lodgings, and he read it almost continually—often when seated on a bank, from which he had difficulty in rising without assistance, for his weakness was extreme, and in his emaciation he was like a ghost. The fire of his eyes was not dimmed—indeed fever had lighted it up beyond even its natural brightness; and though his voice, once so various, was now hollow, his discourse was still that of a Poet. To the last he loved the sunshine, the grass, and the flowers—to the last he had a kind look and a word for the passers-by, who all knew it was Burns. Labouring men, on their way from work, would step aside to the two-three houses called the Brow, to know if there was any hope of his life; and it is not to be doubted that devout people remembered him who had written the "Cottar's Saturday Night" in their

prayers. His sceptical doubts no longer troubled him—they had never been more than shadows—and he had at last the faith of a confiding Christian. We are not even to suppose that his heart was always disquieted within him because of the helpless condition of his widow and orphans. That must have been indeed with him a dismal day on which he wrote three letters about them so full of anguish; but to give vent to grief in passionate outcries usually assuages it, and tranquillity sometimes steals upon despair. His belief that he was so sunk in debt was a delusion—not of delirium—but of the fear that is in love. And comfort must have come to him in the conviction that his country would not suffer the family of her Poet to be in want. As long as he had health they were happy though poor—as long as he was alive they were not utterly destitute. That on his death they would be paupers, was a dread that could have had no abiding place in a heart that knew how it had beat for Scotland, and in the power of genius had poured out all its love on her fields and her people. His heart was pierced with the same wounds that extort lamentations from the death-beds of ordinary men, thinking of what will become of wife and children; but like the pouring of oil upon them by some gracious hand, must have been the frequent recurrence of the belief—"On my death people will pity them, and care for them for my name's sake." Some little matter of money he knew he should leave behind him—the two hundred pounds he had lent to his brother; and it sorely grieved him to think that Gilbert might be ruined by having to return it. What brotherly affection was there! They had not met for a good many years; but personal intercourse was not required to sustain their friendship. At the Brow often must the dying Poet have remembered Mossgiel.

On the near approach of death he returned to his own house, in a spring-cart—and having left it at the foot of the street, he could just totter up to his door. The last words his hand had strength to put on paper were to his wife's father, and were written probably within an hour of his return home. "My dear Sir,—Do for heaven's sake send Mrs Armour here immediately. My wife is hourly expected to be put to bed. Good God! what a situation for her to be in, poor girl, without a friend! I returned from sea-bathing quarters to-day; and

my medical friends would almost persuade me that I am better; but I think and feel that my strength is so gone, that the disorder will prove fatal to me.—Your son-in-law, R. B." That is not the letter of a man in delirium—nor was the letter written a few days before, from the Brow, to "my dearest love." But next day he was delirious, and the day after too, though on being spoken to he roused himself into collected and composed thought, and was, ever and anon, for a few minutes himself—Robert Burns. In his delirium there was nothing to distress the listeners and the lookers-on—words were heard that to them had no meaning—mistakings made by the parting spirit among its language now in confusion breaking up—and sometimes words of trifling import about trifling things—about incidents and events unnoticed in their happening, but now strangely cared for in their final repassing before the closed eyes just ere the dissolution of the dream of a dream. Nor did his deathbed want for affectionate and faithful service. The few who were privileged to tend it did so tenderly and reverently—now by the side of the sick wife, and now by that of the dying husband. Maxwell, a kind physician, came often to gaze in sadness where no skill could relieve. Findlater—supervisor of excise—sat by his bedside the night before he died; and Jessie Lewars—daughter and sister of a gauger—was his sick-nurse. Had he been her own father she could not have done her duty with a more perfect devotion of her whole filial heart—and her name will never die, "here eternised on earth" by the genius of the Poet who for all her Christian kindness to him and his had long cherished towards her the tenderest gratitude. His children had been taken care of by friends, and were led in to be near him now that his hour was come. His wife in her own bed knew it, as soon as her Robert was taken from her; and the great Poet of the Scottish people, who had been born "in the auld clay biggin" on a stormy winter night, died in a humble tenement on a bright summer morning, among humble folk, who composed his body, and according to custom strewed around it flowers brought from their own gardens.

Great was the grief of the people for their Poet's death. They felt that they had lost their greatest man; and it is no exaggeration to say that Scotland was saddened on the day of his funeral. It is seldom that tears are shed even close to the

grave, beyond the inner circle that narrows round it; but that day there were tears in the eyes of many far off at their work, and that night there was silence in thousands of cottages that had so often heard his songs—how sweeter far than any other, whether mournfully or merrily to old accordant melodies they won their way into the heart! The people had always loved him; they best understood his character, its strength and its weakness. Not among them at any time had it been harshly judged, and they allowed him now the sacred privileges of the grave. The religious have done so ever since, pitying more than condemning, nor afraid to praise; for they have confessed to themselves, that had there been a window in their breasts as there was in that of Burns, worse sights might have been seen—a darker revelation. His country charged herself with the care of them he had loved so well, and the spirit in which she performed her duty is the best proof that her neglect—if neglect at any time there were—of her Poet's wellbeing had not been wilful, but is to be numbered with those omissions incident to all human affairs, more to be lamented than blamed, and if not to be forgotten, surely to be forgiven, even by the nations who may have nothing to reproach themselves with in their conduct towards any of their great poets. England, "the foremost land of all this world," was not slack to join in her sister's sorrow, and proved the sincerity of her own, not by barren words, but fruitful deeds, and best of all by fervent love and admiration of the poetry that had opened up so many delightful views into the character and condition of our "bold peasantry, their country's pride," worthy compatriots with her own, and exhibiting in different Manners the same national Virtues.

No doubt, wonder at a prodigy had mingled in many minds with admiration of the ploughman's poetry; and when they of their wondering found an end, such persons began to talk with abated enthusiasm of his genius and increased severity of his character, so that, during intervals of silence, an undercurrent of detraction was frequently heard brawling with an ugly noise. But the main stream soon ran itself clear; and Burns has no abusers now out of the superannuated list; out of it—better still—he has no patrons. In our youth we have heard him spoken of by the big-wigs with exceeding condescension; now the tallest men know that to see his features

rightly they must look up. Shakespeare, Spencer, and Milton, are unapproachable; but the present era is the most splendid in the history of our poetry—in England beginning with Cowper, in Scotland with Burns. Original and racy, each in his own land is yet unexcelled; immovably they both keep their places—their inheritance is sure. Changes wide and deep, for better and for worse, have been long going on in town and country. There is now among the people more education—more knowledge than at any former day. Their worldly condition is more prosperous, while there is still among them a deep religious spirit. By that spirit alone can they be secured in the good, and saved from the evil of knowledge; but the spirit of poetry is akin to that of religion, and the union of the two is in no human composition more powerful than in "the Cottar's Saturday Night." "Let who may have the making of the laws, give me the making of the ballads of a people," is a profound saying; and the truth it somewhat paradoxically expresses is in much as applicable to a cultivated and intellectual as to a rude and imaginative age. From our old traditional ballads we know what was dearest to the hearts and souls of the people. How much deeper must be the power over them of the poems and songs of such a man as Burns, of himself alone superior in genius to all those nameless minstrels, and of a nobler nature; and yet more endeared to them by pity for the sorrows that clouded the close of his life.

SPEECH AT THE BURNS FESTIVAL.

[" The Burns Festival"—a meeting at which the people of Scotland of all ranks assembled in large numbers to do honour to the memory of their great national poet—was celebrated in the vicinity of Ayr on the 6th of August 1844. Not fewer than 80,000 persons were present on the occasion ; and when they marched in procession with playing bands and streaming banners past the platform on which the *Dii Majores* of the jubilee were stationed, the spectacle was in the highest degree exhilarating. It was a demonstration worthy of the nation, and of the genius which the nation delighted to honour. In the afternoon about 2000 of the assembly dined together in an elegant pavilion extemporised for that purpose. The Earl of Eglinton was in the chair: Professor Wilson acted as croupier ; and it was then that he delivered the following oration, in proposing as a toast " The Sons of Burns," who were present as guests at the entertainment.]

Were this Festival but to commemorate the genius of Burns, and it were asked, what need now for such commemoration, since his fame is coextensive with the literature of the land, and enshrined in every household?—I might answer, that although admiration of the poet be wide as the world, yet we, his compatriots, to whom he is especially dear, rejoice to see the universal sentiment concentred in one great assemblage of his own people : that we meet in thousands and tens of thousands to honour him, who delights each single one of us at his own hearth. But this commemoration expresses, too, if not a profounder, a more tender sentiment ; for it is to welcome his sons to the land he has illustrated, so that we may at once indulge our national pride in a great name, and gratify in filial hearts the most pious of affections. There was in former times a custom of crowning great poets. No such ovation honoured our bard, though he too tasted of human applause, felt its delights, and knew the trials that attend it. Which would Burns himself have preferred, a celebration like this in his lifetime, or fifty years after his death? I venture to say, he would have preferred the posthumous as the finer incense. The honour and its object are then seen in juster proportion ; for death confers an elevation which the candid

soul of the poet would have considered, and such honour he would rather have reserved for his manes, than have encountered it with his living infirmities. And could he have foreseen the day, when they for whom at times he was sorely troubled, should, after many years of separation, return to the hut where himself was born, and near it, within the shadow of his monument, be welcomed for his sake by the lords and ladies of the land; and—dearer thought still to his manly breast—by the children and the children's children of people of his own degree, whose hearts he sought to thrill by his first voice of inspiration; surely had the Vision been sweeter to his soul than even that immortal one, in which the Genius of the Land bound the holly round his head, the lyric crown that it will wear for ever.

Of his three Sons sitting here, one only can remember their father's face—those large lustrous eyes of his, so full of many meanings as they darkened in thought, melted in melancholy, or kindled in mirth, but never turned on his children, or on their excellent mother, but with one of tender or intense affection. That son may even on this day have remembrance of his father's head, with its dark clusters not unmixed with grey, and those eyes closed, lying upon the bed of death. Nor, should it for a moment placidly appear, is such image unsuitable to this festival. For in bidding welcome to his sons to their father's land, I feel that, while you have conferred on me a high honour, you have likewise imposed on me a solemn duty; and, however inadequately I may discharge it, I trust that in nought shall I do any violence to the spirit either of humanity or of truth.

I shall speak reverently of Burns's character in hearing of his sons; but not even in their hearing must I forget what is due always to established judgment of the everlasting right. Like all other mortal beings, he had his faults—great even in the eyes of men—grievous in the eyes of Heaven. Never are they to be thought of without sorrow, were it but for the misery with which he himself repented them. But as there is a moral in every man's life, even in its outward condition imperfectly understood, how much more affecting when we read it in confessions wrung out by remorse from the greatly gifted, the gloriously endowed! But it is not his faults that are remembered here—assuredly not these we meet to honour.

To deny error to be error, or to extenuate its blame, *that* makes the outrage upon sacred truth; but to forget that it exists, or if not wholly so, to think of it along with that undercurrent of melancholy emotion at all times accompanying our meditations on the mixed characters of men—*that* is not only allowable, but it is ordered—it is a privilege dear to humanity—and well indeed might he tremble for himself who should in this be deaf to the voice of nature crying from the tomb.

And mark how graciously in this does time aid the inclinations of charity! Its shadows soften what they may not hide. In the distance, discordances that once jarred painfully on our ears are now undistinguishable—lost in the music sweet and solemn, that comes from afar with the sound of a great man's name. It is consolatory to see that the faults of them whom their people honour grow fainter and fainter in the national memory, while their virtues wax brighter and more bright; and if injustice have been done to them in life (and who now shall dare to deny that cruellest injustice was done to Burns?) each succeeding generation becomes more and more dutiful to the dead—desirous to repair the wrong by profounder homage. As it is by his virtues that man may best hope to live in the memory of man, is there not something unnatural, something monstrous, in seeking to eternise here below, that of which the proper doom is obscurity and oblivion? How beneficent thus becomes the power of example! The good that men do then indeed "lives after them"—all that was ethereal in their being alone survives—and thus ought our cherished memories of our best men—and Burns was among our best—to be invested with all consistent excellences; for far better may their virtues instruct us by the love which they inspire, than ever could their vices by aversion.

To dwell on the goodnesses of the great shows that we are at least lovers of virtue—that we may ourselves be aspiring to reach her serene abodes. But to dwell on their faults, and still more to ransack that we may record them, *that* is the low industry of envy, which, grown into a habit, becomes malice, at once hardening and embittering the heart. Such, beyond all doubt, in the case of our great poet, was the source of many "a malignant truth and lie," fondly penned, and carefully corrected for the press, by a class of calumniators that

may never be extinct; for, by very antipathy of nature, the mean hate the magnanimous, the grovelling them who soar. And thus, for many a year, we heard "souls ignoble born to be forgot" vehemently expostulating with some puny phantom of their own heated fancy, as if *it* were the majestic shade of Burns evoked from his Mausoleum for contumely and insult.

Often, too, have we been told by persons somewhat presumptuously assuming the office of our instructors, to beware how we suffer our admiration of genius to seduce us from our reverence of virtue. Never cease to remember—has been still their cry—how far superior is moral to intellectual worth. Nay, they have told us that they are not akin in nature. But akin they are; and grief and pity 'tis that ever they should be disunited. But mark in what a hateful, because hypocritical spirit, such advices as these have not seldom been proffered, till salutary truths were perverted by misapplication into pernicious falsehoods. For these malignant counsellors sought not to elevate virtue, but to degrade genius; and never in any other instance have they stood forth more glaringly self-convicted of the most wretched ignorance of the nature both of the one and the other, than in their wilful blindness to so many of the noblest attributes of humanity in the character of Burns. Both gifts are alike from heaven, and both alike tend heavenward. Therefore we lament to see genius soiled by earthly stain; therefore we lament to see virtue, where no genius is, fall before the tempter. But we, in our own clear natural perceptions, refuse the counsels of those who with the very breath of their warning would blight the wreath bound round the heads of the Muses' sons by a people's gratitude—who, in affected zeal for religion and morality, have so deeply violated the spirit of both, by vile misrepresentations, gross exaggerations, and merciless denunciations of the frailties of our common nature in illustrious men—men who, in spite of their aberrations, more or less deplorable, from the right path, were not only in their prevailing moods devout worshippers of virtue, but in the main tenor of their lives exemplary to their brethren. And such a man was Burns. In boyhood — youth—manhood — where such peasant as he? And if in trouble and in trial, from which his country may well turn in self-reproach, he stood not always fast, yet shame and sin it were, and indelible infamy, were she

not *now* to judge his life as Christianity commands. Preyed upon, alas! by those anxieties that pierce deepest into the noblest hearts,—anxieties for the sakes—even on account of the very means of subsistence—of his own household and his own hearth,—yet was he in his declining, shall we call them disastrous years, on the whole faithful to the divine spirit with which it had pleased Heaven to endow him—on the whole obedient to its best inspirations; while he rejoiced to illumine the paths of poverty with light which indeed was light from heaven, and from an inexhaustible fancy, teeming to the genial warmth of the heart in midst of chill and gloom, continued to the very last to strew along the weary ways of this world flowers so beautiful in their freshness, that to eyes too familiar with tears they looked as if dropped from heaven.

These are sentiments with which I rejoice to hear the sympathy of this great assemblage thus unequivocally expressed—for my words but awaken thoughts lodged deep in all considerate hearts. For which of us is there in whom, known or unknown, alas! there is not much that needs to be forgiven? Which of us that is not more akin to Burns in his fleshly frailties than in his diviner spirit? That conviction regards not merely solemn and public celebrations of reverential memory—such as this; it pervades the tenor of our daily life, runs in our heart's-blood, sits at our hearths, wings our loftiest dreams of human exaltation. How, on this earth, could we love, or revere, or emulate, if, in our contemplation of the human being, we could not sunder the noble, the fair, the gracious, the august, from the dregs of mortality, from the dust that hangs perishably about him the imperishable? We judge in love, that in love we may be judged. At our hearthsides, we gain more than we dared desire, by mutual mercy; at our hearthsides, we bestow and receive a better love, by this power of soft and magnanimous oblivion. We are ourselves the gainers, when thus we honour the great dead. *They* hear not—*they* feel not, excepting by an illusion of our own moved imaginations, which fill up chasms of awful, impassable separation; but *we* hear—*we* feel; and the echo of the acclaim which hills and skies have this day repeated, we can carry home in our hearts, where it shall settle down into the composure of love and pity, and admiration and gratitude, felt to be due for ever to our great poet's shade.

In no other spirit could genius have ever dared, in elegies and hymns, to seek to perpetuate at once a whole people's triumph, and a whole people's grief, by celebration of king, sage, priest, or poet, gone to his reward. From the natural infirmities of his meanest subject, what King was ever free? Against the golden rim that rounds his mortal temples come the same throbbings from blood in disease or passion hurrying from heart to brain, as disturb the aching head of the poor hind on his pallet of straw. But the king had been a guardian, a restorer, a deliverer; therefore his sins are buried or burned with his body; and all over the land he saved, generation after generation continues to cry aloud —"O king, live for ever!" The Sage who, by long meditation on man's nature and man's life, has seen how liberty rests on law, rights on obligations, and that his passions must be fettered, that his will be free—how often has he been overcome, when wrestling in agony with the powers of evil, in that seclusion from all trouble in which reverent admiration nevertheless believes that wisdom for ever serenely dwells! The Servant of God, has he always kept his heart pure from the world, nor ever held up in prayer other than spotless hands? A humble confession of his own utter unworthiness would be his reply alike to scoffer and to him who believes. But, unterrified by plague and pestilence, he had carried comfort into houses deserted but by sin and despair; or he had sailed away, as he truly believed for ever, to savage lands, away from the quiet homes of Christian men—among whom he might have hoped to lead a life of peace, it may be of affluence and honour —for his Divine Master's sake, and for sake of them sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Therefore his name dies not, and all Christendom calls it blest. From such benefactors as these there may seem to be, but there is not, a deep descent to them who have done their service by what one of the greatest of them all has called "the vision and the faculty divine"— them to whom have been largely given the powers of fancy and imagination and creative thought, that they might move men's hearts, and raise men's souls, by the reflection of their own passions and affections in poetry, which is still an inspired speech. Nor have men, in their judgment of the true Poets, dealt otherwise with them than with patriot kings, benign legislators, and holy priests. Them, too, when of the

highest, all nations and ages have reverenced in their gratitude. Whatever is good and great in man's being seems shadowed in the name of Milton; and though he was a very man in the storms of civil strife that shook down the throne at the shedding of the blood of kings, nevertheless, we devoutly believe with Wordsworth, that

"His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart."

But not of such as he only, who "in darkness, and with danger compassed round," soared "beyond this visible diurnal sphere," and whose song was of mercy and judgment, have men wisely resolved to dwell only on what is pure and high and cognate with their thoughts of heaven. Still, as we keep descending from height to height in the regions of song, we desire to regard with love the genius that beautifies wherever it settles down; and, if pity will steal in for human misfortunes, or for human frailties reproach, our love suffers no abatement, and religious men feel that there is piety in pilgrimage to such honoured graves. So feel we now at this commemoration. For our Poet we now claim the privilege, at once bright and austere, of death. We feel that our Burns is brought within the justification of all celebrations of human names; and that, in thus honouring his memory, we virtuously exercise the imaginative rights of enthusiasm owned by every people that has produced its great men.

And with a more especial propriety do we claim this justice in our triumphal celebration of poets, who, like Burns, were led by the character of their minds to derive the matter and impulse of their song, in a stricter sense, from themselves. For they have laid bare to all eyes many of their own weaknesses, at the side of their higher and purer aspirations. Unreserved children of sincerity, by the very open-heartedness which is one great cause of their commanding power, and contagiously diffuses every zealous affection originating in their nobility of nature—by this grown to excess, made negligent of instinctive self-defence, and heedless of misconstruction, or overcome by importunate and clinging temptations—to what charges have they not been exposed from that proneness to disparaging judgments so common in little minds! For such judgments are easy indeed to the very lowest understandings, and regard things that are

visible to eyes that may seldom have commerced with things that are above. But they who know Burns as we know him, know that by this sometimes unregulated and unguarded sympathy with all appertaining to his kind, and especially to his own order, he was enabled to receive into himself all modes of their simple, but not undiversified life, so that his poetry murmurs their loves and joys from a thousand fountains. And suppose—which was the case—that this unguarded sympathy, this quick sensibility, and this vivid capacity of happiness which the moment brings, and the frankness of impulse, and the strength of desire, and the warmth of blood, which have made him what he greatly is, which have been fire and music in his song, and manhood, and courage, and endurance, and independence in his life, have at times betrayed or overmastered him—to turn against him all this self-painting and self-revealing, is it not ungrateful, barbarous, inhuman? Can he be indeed a true lover of his kind, who would record in judgment against such a man words that have escaped him in the fervour of the pleading designed to uphold great causes dear to humanity?—who would ignobly strike the self-disarmed?—scornfully insult him who, kneeling at the Muses' confessional, whispers secrets that take wings and fly abroad to the uttermost parts of the earth? Can they be lovers of the people who do so? who find it in their hearts thus to think, and speak, and write of Robert Burns?—He who has reconciled poverty to its lot, toil to its taskwork, care to its burden—nay, I would say even—grief to its grave? And by one Immortal Song has sanctified for ever the poor man's Cot—by such a picture as only genius, in the inspiring power of piety, could have painted; has given enduring life to the image—how tender and how true!—of the Happy Night passing by sweet transition from this worky world into the Hallowed Day, by God's appointment breathing a heavenly calm over all Christian regions in their rest—nowhere else so profoundly—and may it never be broken!—as over the hills and valleys of our beloved, and yet religious land!

It cannot be said that the best biographers of Burns, and his best critics, have not done, or desired to do, justice to his character as well as to his genius; and, accordingly as the truth has been more entirely and fearlessly spoken, has he

appeared the nobler and nobler man. All our best poets, too, have exultingly sung the worth, while they mourned the fate of him, the brightest of the brotherhood. But above, and below, and round about all that they have been uttering, has all along been heard a voice, which they who know how to listen for it can hear, and which has pronounced a decision in his favour not to be reversed; for on earth it cannot be carried to a higher tribunal. A voice heard of old on great national emergencies, when it struck terror into the hearts of tyrants, who quaked, and quailed, and quitted for aye our land before "the unconquered Caledonian spear" —nor, since our union with noblest England, ever slack to join with hers and fervid Erin's sons, the thrice-repeated cry by which battle-fields are cleared; but happier, far happier to hear, in its low deep tone of peace. For then it is like the sound of distant waterfalls, the murmur of summer woods, or the sea rolling in its rest. I mean the Voice of the People of Scotland—the Voice of her Peasantry and her Trades—of all who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow —her Working Men.

I presume not to draw their character. But this much I will say, that in the long-run they know whom it is fitting they should honour and love. They will not be dictated to in their choice of the names that with them shall be household words. Never, at any period of their history, have they been lightly moved; but, when moved, their meaning was not to be mistaken; tenacious their living grasp as the clutch of death; though force may wrench the weapon from their hands, no force can wrench the worship from their hearts. They may not be conversant with our written annals; but in our oral traditions they are familiar with historic truths—grand truths conceived according to the People's idea of their own national mind, as their hearts have kindled in imagination of heroic or holy men. Imaginary but real—for we all believe that men as good, as wise, as brave, have been amongst us as ever fancy fabled for a people's reverence. What manner of men have been their darlings? It would be hard to say; for their love is not exclusive—it is comprehensive. In the national memory live for ever characters how widely different!—with all the shades, fainter or darker, of human infirmity! For theirs is not the sickly taste that craves for perfection where

no frailties are. They do not demand in one and the same personage inconsistent virtues. But they do demand sincerity, and integrity, and resolution, and independence, and an open front, and an eye that fears not to look in the face of clay! And have not the grave and thoughtful Scottish people always regarded with more especial affection those who have struggled with adversity—who have been tried by temptations from without or from within—now triumphant, now overcome—but, alike in victory or defeat, testifying by their conduct that they were animated by no other desire so steadily as by love of their country and its people's good? Not those who have been favourites of fortune, even though worthy of the smiles in which they basked; but those who rose superior to fortune, who could not frown them down. Nor have they withheld their homage from the unfortunate in this world of chance and change, if, in abasement of condition, by doing its duties they upheld the dignity of their own nature, and looked round them on their honest brethren in poverty with pride.

And how will such a people receive a great National Poet? How did they receive Burns? With instant exultation. At once, they knew of themselves, before critics and philosophers had time to tell them, that a great Genius of their own had risen, and they felt a sudden charm diffused over their daily life. By an inexplicable law, humour and pathos are dependent on the same constitution of mind; and in his Poems they found the very soul of mirth, the very soul of sadness, as they thought it good with him to be merry, or to remember with him, "that man was made to mourn." But besides what I have said of them, the people of Scotland hold in the world's repute—signally so—the name of a religious people. Many of them, the descendants of the old Covenanters, heirs of the stern zeal which took up arms for the purity of the national faith—still tinged, it may be, by the breath of the flame that then passed over the land—retain a certain severity of religious judgment in questions of moral transgression, which is known to make a part of hereditary Scottish manners—especially in rural districts, where manners best retain their stamp. But the sound natural understanding of the Scottish peasant, I use the liberty to say, admits, to take their place at the side of one another, objects of his liberal and comprehensive regard, which might appear, to

superficial observation and shallow judgment, to stand upon such different grounds, as that the approbation of the one should exclude the admiration of the other. But not so. Nature in him is various as it is vigorous. He does not, with an over-jealous scrutiny, vainly try to reduce into seeming consistency affections spontaneously springing from many sources. Truth lies at the bottom; and, conscious of truth, he does not mistrust or question his own promptings. An awful reverence, the acknowledgment of a Law without appeal or error—Supreme, Sacred, Irresistible—rules in his judgment of other men's actions, and of his own. Nevertheless, under shelter and sanction of that rule, he feels, loves, admires, like a man. Religion has raised and guards in him —it does not extinguish—the natural human heart. If the martyrs of his worship to him are holy—holy, too, are his country's heroes. And holy her poets—if such she have—who have sung—as during his too short life above them all sang Burns—for Scotland's sake. Dear is the band that ties the humbly educated man to the true national poet. To many in the upper classes he is, perhaps, but one among a thousand artificers of amusement who entertain and scatter the tedium of their idler hours. To the peasant the book lies upon his shelf a household treasure. There he finds depicted himself —his own works and his own ways. There he finds a cordial for his drooping spirits, nutriment for his wearied strength. Burns is his brother—his helper in time of need, when fretfulness and impatience are replaced with placidity by his strains, or of a sudden with a mounting joy. And far oftener than they who know not our peasantry would believe, before their souls awakened from torpor he is a luminous and benign presence in the dark hut; for, in its purity and power, his best poetry is felt to be inspired, and subordinate to the voice of heaven.

And will such a people endure to hear their own Poet wronged? No, no. Think not to instruct *them* in the right spirit of judgment. They have read the Scriptures, perhaps, to better purpose than their revilers, and know better how to use the lessons learned there, applicable alike to us all—the lessons, searching and merciful, which proscribe mutual judgment amongst beings, all, in the eye of absolute Holiness and Truth, stained, erring, worthless: And none so well as

aged religious men in such dwellings know, from their own experience, from what they have witnessed among their neighbours, and from what they have read of the lives of good and faithful servants, out of the heart of what moral storms and shipwrecks, that threatened to swallow the strong swimmer in the middle passage of life, has often been landed safe at last, the rescued worshipper upon the firm land of quiet duties, and of years exempt from the hurricane of the passions! Thus thoughtfully guided in their opinion of him, who died young—cut off long before the period when others, under the gracious permission of overruling mercy, have begun to redeem their errors, and fortified perhaps by a sacred office, to enter upon a new life—they will for ever solemnly cherish the memory of the Poet of the Poor. And in such sentiments there can be no doubt but that all his countrymen share; who will, therefore, rightly hold out between Burns and all enemies a shield which clattering shafts may not pierce. They are proud of him, as a lowly father is proud of an illustrious son. The rank and splendour attained reflects glory down, but resolves not, nor weakens one single tie.

Ay, for many a deep reason the Scottish people love their own Robert Burns. Never was the personal character of poet so strongly and endearingly exhibited in his song. They love him, because he loved his own order, nor ever desired for a single hour to quit it. They love him, because he loved the very humblest condition of humanity, where everything good was only the more commended to his manly mind by disadvantages of social position. They love him, because he saw with just anger, how much the judgments of "silly coward man" are determined by such accidents, to the neglect or contempt of native worth. They love him for his independence. What wonder! To be brought into contact with rank and wealth—a world inviting to ambition, and tempting to a thousand desires—and to choose rather to remain lowly and poor, than seek an easier or a brighter lot, by courting favour from the rich and great—was a legitimate ground of pride, if any ground of pride be legitimate. He gave a tongue to this pride, and the boast is inscribed in words of fire in the Manual of the Poor. It was an exuberant feeling, as all his feelings were exuberant, and he let them all overflow. But sometimes, forsooth! he did not express

them in sufficiently polite or courteous phrase! And that too was well. He stood up not for himself only, but for the great class to which he belonged, and which in his days—and too often in ours—had been insulted by the pride of superior station, when unsupported by personal merit, to every bold peasant a thing of scorn. They love him, because he vindicated the ways of God to man, by showing that there was more genius and virtue in huts, than was dreamt of in the world's philosophy. They love him for his truthful pictures of the poor. Not there are seen slaves sullenly labouring, or madly leaping in their chains; but in nature's bondage, content with their toil, sedate in their sufferings, in their recreations full of mirth—are seen Free Men. The portraiture, upon the whole, is felt by us—and they know it—to demand at times pity as a due; but challenges always respect, and more than respect, for the condition which it glorifies. The Land of Burns! What mean we by the words? Something more, surely, than that Fortune, in mere blindness, had produced a great poet here? We look for the inspiring landscape, and here it is; but what could all its beauties have availed, had not a people inhabited it possessing all the sentiments, thoughts, aspirations, to which nature willed to give a voice in him of her choicest melody? Nothing prodigious, after all, in the birth of such a poet among such a people. Was anything greater in the son than the austere resignation of the father? In his humble compeers there was much of the same tender affection, sturdy independence, strong sense, self-reliance, as in him; and so has Scotland been prolific, throughout her lower orders, of men who have made a figure in her literature and her history; but to Burns nature gave a finer organisation, a more powerful heart, and an ampler brain, imbued with that mystery we call genius, and he stands forth conspicuous above all her sons.

From the character I have sketched of the Scottish people, of old and at this day, it might perhaps be expected that much of their poetry would be of a stern, fierce, or even ferocious kind—the poetry of bloodshed and destruction. Yet not so. Ballads enow, indeed, there are, imbued with the true warlike spirit—narrative of exploits of heroes. But many a fragmentary verse, preserved by its own beauty, survives to prove that gentlest poetry has ever been the produce

both of heathery mountain and broomy brae; but the names of the sweet singers are heard no more, and the plough has gone over their graves. And they had their music too, plaintive or dirge-like, as it sighed for the absent, or wailed for the dead. The fragments were caught up, as they floated about in decay; and by him, the sweetest lyrist of them all, were often revivified by a happy word that let in a soul, or, by a few touches of his genius, the fragment became a whole, so exquisitely moulded, that none may tell what lines belong to Burns, and what to the poet of ancient days. They all belong to him now, for but for him they would have perished utterly; while his own matchless lyrics, altogether original, find the breath of life on the lips of a people who have gotten them all by heart. What a triumph of the divine faculty thus to translate the inarticulate language of nature into every answering modulation of human speech! And with such felicity, that the verse is now as national as the music! Throughout all these exquisite songs, we see the power of an element which we, raised by rank and education into ignorance, might not have surmised in the mind of the people. The love-songs of Burns are prominent in the poetry of the world by their purity. Love, truly felt and understood, in the bosom of a Scottish peasant, has produced a crowd of strains which are owned for the genuine and chaste language of the passion, by highly as well as by lowly born—by cultured and by ruder minds—that may charm in haughty saloons, not less than under smoke-blackened roofs. Impassioned beyond all the songs of passion, yet, in the fearless fervour of remembered transports, pure as hymeneals; and dear, therefore, for ever to Scottish maidens in hours when hearts are wooed and won; dear, therefore, for ever to Scottish matrons who, at household work, are happy to hear them from their daughters' lips. And he, too, is the Poet of their friendships. At stanzas instinct with blithe and cordial amities, more brotherly the grasp of peasant's in peasant's toil-hardened hands! The kindliness of their nature, not chilled, though oppressed with care, how ready at his bidding—at the repeated air of a few exquisite but unsought-for words of his—to start up all alive! He is the Poet of all their humanities. His Daisy has made all the flowers of Scotland dear. His moorland has its wild inhabitants, whose cry is sweet. For sake of the old dumb

fellow-servant which his farmer gratefully addresses on entering on another year of labour, how many of its kind have been fed or spared! In the winter storm 'tis useless to think of the sailor on his slippery shrouds; but the "outland eerie cattle" he teaches his feres to care for in the drifting snow. In what jocund strains he celebrates their amusements, their recreations, their festivals, passionately pursued with all their pith by a people in the business of life grave and determined as if it left no hours for play! Gait, dress, domicile, furniture, throughout all his poetry, are Scottish as their dialect; and sometimes, in the pride of his heart, he rejoices by such nationality to provoke some alien's smile. The sickle, the scythe, and the flail, the spade, the mattock, and the hoe, have been taken up more cheerfully by many a toil-worn cottar, because of the poetry with which Burns has invested the very implements of labour. Now and then, too, here and there peals forth the clangour of the war-trumpet. But Burns is not, in the vulgar sense, a military poet; nor are the Scottish, in a vulgar sense, a military people. He and they best love tranquil scenes and the secure peace of home. They are prompt for war, if war be needed—no more. Therefore two or three glorious strains he has that call to the martial virtue quiescent in their bosoms—echoes from the warfare of their ancient self-deliverance—menacings—a prophetical *Nemo me impune lacesset*, should a future foe dare to insult the beloved soil. So nourishes his poetry all that is tender and all that is stern in the national character. So does it inspire his people with pride and contentment in their own peculiar lot; and as *that* is at once both poetical and practical patriotism, the poet who thus lightens and brightens it is the best of patriots.

I have been speaking of Burns as the poet of the country—and his is the rural, the rustic muse. But we know well that the charm of his poetry has equal power for the inhabitants of towns and cities. Occupations, familiar objects, habitual thoughts, are indeed very different for the two great divisions of the people; but there is a brotherhood both of consanguinity and of lot. Labour—the hand pledged to constant toil—the daily support of life, won by its daily wrestle with a seemingly adverse but friendly necessity—in these they are all commoners

with one another. He who cheers, who solaces, who inspirits, who honours, who exalts the lot of the labourer, is the poet alike of all the sons of industry. The mechanic who inhabits a smoky atmosphere, and in whose ear an unwholesome din from workshop and thoroughfare rings hourly, hangs from his rafter the caged linnet; and the strain that should gush free from blossomed or green bough, that should mix in the murmur of the brook, mixes in and consoles the perpetual noise of the loom or the forge. Thus Burns sings more especially to those whose manner of life he entirely shares; but he sings a precious memento to those who walk in other and less pleasant ways. Give then the people knowledge, without stint, for it nurtures the soul. But let us never forget, that the mind of man has other cravings—that it draws nourishment from thoughts, beautiful and tender, such as lay reviving dews on the drooping fancy, and are needed the more by him to whom they are not wafted fresh from the face of nature. This virtue of these pastoral and rural strains to penetrate and permeate conditions of existence different from those in which they had their origin, appears wheresoever we follow them. In the mine, in the dungeon, upon the great waters, in remote lands under fiery skies, Burns's poetry goes with his countrymen. Faithfully portrayed, the image of Scotland lives there; and thus she holds, more palpably felt, her hand upon the hearts of her children, whom the constraint of fortune or ambitious enterprise carries afar from the natal shores. Unrepining and unrepentant exiles, to whom the haunting recollection of hearth and field breathes in that dearest poetry, not with homesick sinkings of heart, but with home-invigorated hopes that the day will come when their eyes shall have their desire, and their feet again feel the greensward and the heather-bent of Scotland. Thus is there but one soul in this our great National Festival; while to swell the multitudes that from morning light continued flocking towards old Ayr, till at mid-day they gathered into one mighty mass in front of Burns's Monument, came enthusiastic crowds from countless villages and towns, from our metropolis, and from the great City of the West, along with the sons of the soil dwelling all round the breezy uplands of Kyle, and in regions that stretch away to the stormy mountains of Morven.

Sons of Burns! Inheritors of the name which we proudly revere, you claim in the glad solemnity which now unites us, a privileged and more fondly affectionate part. To the honour with which we would deck the memory of your father, your presence, and that of your respected relatives, nor less that of her sitting in honour by their side, who, though not of his blood, did the duties of a daughter at his dying bed, give an impressive living reality; and while we pay this tribute to the poet, whose glory, beyond that of any other, we blend with the renown of Scotland, it is a satisfaction to us, that we pour not out our praises in the dull cold ear of death. Your lives have been passed for many years asunder; and now that you are freed from the duties that kept you so long from one another, your intercourse, wherever and whenever permitted by your respective lots to be renewed, will derive additional enjoyment from the recollection of this day—a sacred day indeed to brothers, dwelling—even if apart—in unity and peace. And there is one whose warmest feelings, I have the best reason to know, are now with you and us, as well on your own account as for the sake of your great parent, whose character he respects as much as he admires his genius, though it has pleased Heaven to visit him with such affliction as might well deaden even in such a heart as his all satisfaction even with this festival. But two years ago, and James Burnes was the proud and happy father of three sons, all worthy of their race. One only now survives; and may he in due time return from India to be a comfort, if but for a short, a sacred season, to his old age! But Sir Alexander Burnes—a name that will not die—and his gallant brother, have perished, as all the world knows, in the flower of their life—foully murdered in a barbarous land. For them many eyes have wept; and their country, whom they served so faithfully, deplores them among her devoted heroes. Our sympathy may not soothe such grief as his; yet it will not be refused, coming to him along with our sorrow for the honoured dead. Such a father of such sons has far other consolations.

In no other way more acceptable to yourselves could I hope to welcome you, than by thus striving to give an imperfect utterance to some of the many thoughts and feelings that have been crowding into my mind and heart concerning your

father. And I have felt all along that there was not only no impropriety in my doing so, after the address of our noble Chairman, but that it was even the more required of me that I should speak in a kindred spirit, by that very address, altogether so worthy of his high character, and so admirably appropriate to the purpose of this memorable day. Not now for the first time, by many times, has he shown how well he understands the ties by which, in a country like this, men of high are connected with men of humble birth, and how amply he is endowed with the qualities that best secure attachment between the Castle and the Cottage. We rise to welcome you to your Father's land.

CHRISTOPHER ON COLONSAY.

FYTTE I.

[JUNE 1834.]

[This ride, although enriched with many imaginative embellishments, is not all a fable. The Professor actually tried the paces of Colonsay in a regular match, against those of a thorough-bred filly, ridden by a sporting character of local celebrity, on the road between Elleray and Ambleside, and came off winner. This was in 1823 or 1824.]

In our younger days we were more famous for our pedestrian than for our equestrian feats; liker Pollux than Castor. Yet were we no mean horseman; riding upwards of thirteen stone, we seldom mounted the silk jacket, yet we have won matches —and eyewitnesses are yet alive of our victory over old Q——, on the last occasion he ever went to scale—after as pretty a run home—so said the best judges—as was ever seen at Newmarket. Had you beheld us a half-century ago in a steeplechase, you would have sworn we were either the Gentleman in Black, or about to enter the Church. Then we used to stick close to the tail of the pack, to prevent raw, rash lads from riding over the hounds—and what a tale could we tell of the day thou didst die, thou grey, musty, moth-eaten Foxface! now almost mouldered away on the wall—there—below the antlers of the Deer-king of Braemar, who, as the lead struck his heart, leaped twenty feet up in the air, before his fall was proclaimed by all the echoes of the forest. We hear them now in the silence of the wilderness. Pleasant but mournful to the soul is the memory of joys that are past, saith old Ossian—and from the cavern of old North's breast issueth solemnly the same oracular response! For many a joyous crew—are they not ghosts!

Gout and rheumatism were ours—we sold our stud, and

took to cobs. In the field AUT CÆSAR AUT NULLUS had been our motto—and when no more able to ride up to it, in a wise spirit we were contented with the high-ways and by-ways—and Flying Kit, ere he had passed his grand climacteric—*sic transit gloria mundi*—became celebrated for his jog-trot.

Thus for many years we purchased nothing above fourteen hands and an inch—and that of course became the standard of the universal horse-flesh in the country—nobody dreaming of riding the high horse in the neighbourhood of Christopher North. If at any time anything was sent to us by a friend above that mark, it was understood the gift might be returned without offence—though, to spare the giver mortification, we used to ride the animal for a few days, that the circumstance might be mentioned when he was sent to market; nor need we say that a word in our hand-writing to that effect entitled the laying on of ten pounds in the twenty on his price. We had an innate inclination towards iron-greys—on that was engrafted an acquired taste for hog-manes—and on that again was superinduced a desire for crop-ears—till ere long all these qualifications were esteemed essential to the character of a roadster, and within a circle of a hundred miles you met with none but iron-grey, hog-maned, crop-eared, fourteen-hand-and-an-inch cobs—even in carts, shandrydans, gigs, post-chaises, and coaches—nay, the mail.

But though our usual pace was the jog-trot, think not that we did not occasionally employ *the trot par excellence*—and eke the walk. No cob would have been suffered standing-room for a single day in our six-stalled stable who could not walk five miles an hour, and trot fourteen; and 'twas a spectacle good for sore eyes, all the six slap-banging it at that rate, while a sheet might have covered them, each bowled along by his own light lad, by way of air and exercise, when the road was dusty a rattling whirlwind that startled the birds in the green summer-woods. For almost all the low roads in our county were sylvan—those along the mountains treeless altogether, and shaded here and there by superincumbent cliffs.

At the first big drop of blue-ruin from a thunder-cloud—so well had they all come to know their master's ailment, that it mattered not which of the six he bestrode—our friend below us, laying back the stools of his ears, and putting out his nose with a shake of his head, while his hog-mane bristled electric

in the gloomy light, in ten yards was at the top of his speed, up-hill down-dale—without regard to turnpikes, all paid for at so much per annum—while children ceased their play before cottage-doors, and boys on schoolhouse greens clapped their hands, and waved their caps, to the thrice-repeated cry of "There he goes! Hurra for old Christopher North." For even then we had an old look—it was so *gash*—though hovering but on three-score—and our hair, it too was of the iron-grey—"but more through toil than age"—nothing grizzling the knowledge-box so surely, though slowly, as the ceaseless clink-clank of that mysterious machinery—with its wheels within wheels—instinct with spirit—the Brain. Oh! if it would but lie still—for one day in the seven—in Sabbath rest! Then too might that other perpetual miracle and mobile—the Heart—hush its tumult—and mortal man might know the nature as well as the name of peace!

Among the many equine gifts made us, in those days, by our friends on mainland and isle, was one of great powers and extraordinary genius, whom, for sake of the giver, we valued above all the rest—and whom we christened by the euphonious name of his birthplace among the waves—Colonsay. A cob let us call him, though he was not a cob—for he showed blood of a higher, a Neptunian strain; an iron-grey let us call him, though he was not an iron-grey—for his shoulders, and flanks, and rump, were dappled even as if he had been a cloud-steed of the Isle of Sky; a hog-mane let us call him, though he was not a hog-mane, for wild above rule or art, that high-ridged arch disdained the shears, and in spite of them showed at once in picturesque union boarish bristle and leonine hair; a crop-ear let us call him, though he was not a crop-ear, for over one only of those organs had the aurist achieved an imperfect triumph, while the other, unshorn of all its beams, was indeed a flapper, so that had you seen or heard it in the obscure twilight, you would have crouched before the coming of an elephant. His precise height is not known on earth even unto this day, for he abhorred being measured, and after the style in which he repelled various artful attempts to take his altitude by timber or tape, no man who valued his life at a tester would, with any such felonious intent, have laid hand on his shoulder. Looking at him you could not help thinking of the days "when wild *'mid rocks* the noble savage ran;"

while you felt the idea of *breaking* him to be as impracticable as impious—such specimen seemed he, as he stood before you, of stubbornness and freedom—while in his eye was concentrated the stern light of an indomitable self-will amounting to the sublime.

To give even a slight sketch of the character of Colonsay would far transcend the powers of the pen now employed on these pages—for than Pope's Duke Wharton he was a more incomprehensible antithesis. At times the summer cloud not more calm than he—the summer cloud, moving with one equable motion, all by itself, high up along a level line that is invisible to the half-shut eyes of the poet lying on his back, miles below among earth-flowers, till the heavenly creature, surely life-imbued, hath passed from horizon to horizon, away like a dubious dream! Then all at once—we are now speaking of Colonsay—off like a storm-tost vapour along the cliffs, capriciously careering across cataracted chasms, and then whew! whirling in a moment over the mountain-tops! With no kind of confidence could you—if sober—count upon him for half a mile. Yet we have known him keep the not noiseless tenor of his way, at the jog-trot, for many miles, as if to beguile you into a belief that all danger of your losing your seat was over for that day, and that true wisdom, dismissing present fears, might be forming schemes for the safety of to-morrow's ride. Yet, ere sunset, pride had its fall. Pretending to hear something a-rustle in the hedge, or something a-crawl in the ditch, or something a-flow across the road below the stones, with a multitudinous stamp, and a multifarious start, as if he had been transformed from a quadruped at the most, into a centipede at the very least, he has wheeled round on a most perilous pivot, within his own length, and with the bit in his teeth, off due east, at that nameless pace far beyond the gallop, at which a mile-long avenue of trees seems one green flash of lightning, and space and time annihilated! You have lost your stirrups and your wits—yet instinct takes the place of reason—and more than demi-corpsed, wholly incorporated and entirely absorbed in the mane—the hair and bristle of the boar-mane-leonine—you become part and parcel of the very cause of your own being hurried beyond the bounds of this visible diurnal sphere—and exist but in an obscure idea of an impersonation of an ultra-marine motion, which, in the

miserable penury of artificial language, men are necessitated to call a gallop.

An absent man is a more disgusting, but not so dangerous an animal, as an absent horse. Now, of all the horses we ever knew, the most absent was Colonsay. Into what profound reveries have we not seen him fall—while "his drooped head sunk gradually low," till his long upper-lip almost touched the road, as if he had been about to browse on dust or dirt, yet nothing was farther from his mind than any such intention—for his eyes were shut—and there he was jog-trotting in the sunshine sound asleep! We knew better than to ride him with spurs—and he knew better than to care for the cuddy-heels of a gouty sexagenarian. His dappled coat was sleek and bright as if burnished with Day and Martin's patent greying—had those great practical chemists then flourished, and confined their genius exclusively to the elucidation of that colour. But his hide was hard as that of a rhinoceros, and callous to a whip that would have cut a Cockney to the liver. The leather was never tanned that could have established a raw on those hips. Ply the thong till your right hand hung idle as if palsied by your side—the pace was the same—and milestone after milestone showed their numerals, each at the appointed second. But "a change came o'er the spirit of his dream"—and from imagining himself drawing peats along a flat in Dream-land, he all at once fell into the delusion that he was let loose from his day's darg into the pleasant meadows of Idlesse, and up with his heels in a style of *funking* more splendid in design and finished in execution than any exhibition of the kind it has ever been our lot to see out of Stony Arabia. The discovery soon made by him that we were on his back, abated nothing of his vagaries, but, on the contrary, only made them more vehement; while on such occasions—and they were not unfrequent—nor can we account for the phenomenon on any other theory than the one we have now propounded—his neighing outdid that of his own sire—a terrific mixture of snuffing, snorting, blowing, squeaking, grunting, groaning, roaring, bellowing, shrieking and yelling, that indeed "gave the world assurance of a horse," and murdered silence—for the echoes dared not answer—nor, indeed, could they be expected to understand—or if they understood—to speak a language so portentously

preternatural, and beyond the powers of utterance—though great—of blind cliff or wide-mouthed cavern.

He was a miraculous jumper—of wooden gates and stone-walls. He cleared six feet like winking; and as to paling, or hedges, or anything of that sort, he pressed upon them in a sidelong sort of way peculiar to himself, now with shoulder and now with rump, and then butting with his bull-like forehead, marched through the breach as coolly as a Gurwood or a Mackie at the head of a forlorn-hope at Ciudad Rodrigo or Badajos. To a ha-ha he cried "ha—ha!" and up or down in red-deer fashion—through clover-field or flowering shrubbery—all one to Colonsay. In a four-acre pasture, twenty men, halter in hand, might in vain combine to catch him; and as for the old stale trick that rarely fails to entrap the rest of his race—corn tossed *à la tambourine*—he would give his forelock a shake, and wheeling right shoulder forwards, break through the cordon like a clap of thunder. Now all this was very excusable—nay, perhaps praiseworthy—while he was bare-backed and unbestridden; but if, on passing an enclosure of an inviting aspect, whether of grass or oats, he chose to be either gluttonously or epicurishly inclined, the accident of your being on the saddle, and on your way along the high-road to town or village where you had business to transact, or to pay a visit, was then a trifle with him unworthy of a moment's consideration; and then without a moment's warning, he either jumped like a cat over the wall, with his heels pushing down a few yards of coping; or if a good, stout, thickset thorn-hedge stood in the way of the gratification of his appetite, he demolished it in like manner as we had seen him demolish a hundred, and bore us through the enemies' bayonets across the counterscarp, over the glacis, up to the crest of the position where perhaps a tree stood by way of standard, and then setting himself to serious eating, no man could have pulled his nose from the ground, under a Briareus.

Such conduct was at least intelligible; but that is more than we could ever bring ourselves to think of some of his other acts—such, for example, as changing his mind, without any assignable reason, when to all appearance jog-trotting along, perfectly well pleased with his journey, and by means of an easy roundish turn, without any bustle or symptom of

impatience whatever, changing his direction, and with imperturbable gravity mildly taking us home again, as if we were of our own accord jogging back for our purse or pocket-book. Such must have been one of the many suppositions at many times ventured upon by roadside stone-breakers, once more bowing their heads to us, so soon after our declination behind the hill unexpectedly reappearing with our face to the orient. The servants began to suspect that these returns were made purposely by us that we might catch them caterwauling; and the housekeeper herself, we thought, sometimes looked sulky when our *hem* brought her to the door; but on divulging to her the secret, we were restored to our former place in her esteem. The lintel of the stable-door was rather low, and on two occasions our friend walked into his stall with us lying extended on his back, with our hatless head over his neck, the only position in which we could have evited death —a knee-pan each time looking blue on its escape from dislocation. Yet no sooner was the seemingly stable-sick steed tied up in his stall, but with a Jack-Sheppard touch he jerked his head out of the collar, and jumping over an old cairn-looking wall, began chasing the cows, ever and anon turning up his lip in the air as if he were laughing at the lumbering gait of the great, big, fat, unwieldy animals straddling out of his way, with their swollen udders, while the Damsel of the Dairy flew shouting and waving her apron to the rescue, fearing that the hoped-for quey-calf of the teeming Alderney might, in her mother's fright, be untimeously born—nor hesitating to aver that it was manifestly that wicked Colonsay's intent to bring about such lamentable catastrophe. But we are assured that he had no idea of Madame Française being "as ladies wish to be who love their lords;" for though the most incomprehensible of God's creatures, poor Colonsay had not an atom of cruelty in his whole composition; and, except when he took it for a *cleg*, would not have hurt a fly.

His strength was even more surprising than his agility, and we should have had no fears for the result in backing him for five pulls at an oak root, against a First-prize Suffolk Punch. True that his nerves were delicate, like those of almost all other people of genius; but the nervous system, a subject, by the by, that seems less and less understood every day, is one thing, and the muscular system another—and the

osseous system is a third, and sinews are a fourth; in these three he excelled all mare-born, and was in good truth the NAG OF THE AGE. If you had but seen him in the plough! Single on the stiffest soil, with his nose almost touching his counter, and his mighty forehand working far more magnificently than any steam-engine, for there you saw power and heard it not, how he tore his unimpeded progress through the glebe fast falling over in six-inch deep furrows, over which Ceres rejoiced to see the sheeted sower, careless of rooks, scatter golden in the sunshine the glancing seed! Then behind his heels how hopped the harrows! Clods were soon turned to tufts, and tufts triturated into soil, and soil so pulverised, that the whole four-and-twenty acres, so laid down, smiled smooth as a garden, and might have been sown with flowers! Ploughing and harrowing may truly be said to have been his darling amusements—illustrations of "labor ipse voluptas." So engaged, he played his capricious pranks no more—he was an agriculturist indeed—for one look of Colonsay at that work, it would have been well worth the while of the ghost of Triptolemus to have beseeched Pluto for an hour's furlough on earth—but sorely he would have wept after such sight to return to the untilled world of shadows.

But he was dangerous—very—in a gig. On one occasion, "under the opening eyelids of the morn"—we remember it as if it had been yesterday—just as a sleepy man in a yellow shirt and a red night-cap was fumbling at the lock—impatient of the dilatory nudity, Colonsay, careless or forgetful of the gig behind him, towering higher than the toll-house, rising up like the most potent of his progenitors, prepared himself for a standing-leap, and cleared the pike at a spang! Many truths, says Aristotle, are more incredible than fictions, and this one may be brought to the illustration of his Poetick. We carried away none of our tackle—not a strap started—not a buckle lost its tongue. The wheels—though great spokesmen—said nothing;—and the body of the gig "on its smooth axle spinning slept" without being awakened; yet 'twas no glamour gate—a real red six-barred two-posted heart-of-oak gate, that the week before had turned a runaway post-shay into the lake, and shivered—in neither case without some loss of life—a delirious shandrydan into atoms!

We think we see him now—and OURSELVES on his back—a green branch waving on his head, to keep the buzzers from settling round his eyes—our head bare then but for the beaver—now shadowed with undying laurels. That we should have persisted for years in riding the animal, of whose character we have now given you a very few traits, must seem to all who do not know him and us, very like infatuation; but we are not ashamed to confess, that there had grown up between us a strong mutual attachment, under the secret, and, perhaps, at the time by both parties unsuspected influence of similarity of sentiment and opinion and conduct on most of the great affairs of life. To illustrate this congeniality would require more time and space than we can now afford—suffice it to say for the present, in half a sentence, Christopher and Colonsay dearly loved—each his own wild will and his own wild way; and though in following them out, they were often found to run counter, yet we generally were at one in the end. Rough-shod, we should not have feared to ride across the Frozen Ocean—shoeless, in spite of the simoom through the Sandy Desert. Where there was danger, man and horse were a Centaur. Bear witness, with a voice muttering through vapours, ye cliffs of Scafell! In your sunless depths, O Bowscale Tarn, have not the two Undying Fish seen our heads reflected at noonday among the pallid images of the stars?

Ay, when he chose he was, in good truth, the devil to go! Then the instant he saw the horn of a side-saddle he was as gentle as a lamb. Soon as the blue gleam of that riding-habit met his eye, he whinnied softly as a silly foal, and sunk on his knees on the turf, to let the loveliest lady in the land ascend her throne like a queen, and then, changed by joy into one of the bright coursers of the Sun, away bore he at a celestial canter that Light Divine, more beautiful than Aurora cloud-carried through the gates of the dawn—"a new sun risen on mid-day." O God of heaven! how black—deep—insatiate—the maw of the ever-hungry Grave!

But we come now to our Recollections of the Trotting-match, whereof all England rang from side to side—and shall not delay you long by an account of the circumstances under which it was made, though of them we must say something, and likewise something of our celebrated antagonists.

Sam Sitwell was well known in his day as one of the best in all England. He had long had it all his own way in the South, but coming on the wrong side of Kendal, he found we were too far North for him, and caught a Tartar. His favourite prad too was a grey, a mare, standing fifteen hands and a half, and the story ran she had done seventeen miles in the hour, with some minutes to spare, though she was rather a rum one to look at, and some said a roarer. The day we made the match she seemed somewhat sweaty, and by no means costive; but we had afterwards reason to suspect that such symptoms were all gammon and spinnage. We were badgered into it on a Saturday, and the affair was to come off on the following Wednesday—so there was little time for training—nine miles out and in from the 9th to the 18th milestone on the road from Kendal to Keswick. The bet between us and Sam was a mere hundred gold guineas, and we had plenty of offers of two to one from other quarters that Colonsay did not accomplish the distance within the hour—but we despise by-bets, and never suffer our skill to be diverted from the main-chance. That Colonsay would do the distance in less time than the Shuffler—for that was the name of the mare—we did not doubt; but whether he was to do the distance in an hour or in half-a-dozen of hours, a day or a week, would depend, we knew, on the Book of Accidents, which we had often found to contain many chapters.

Sam Sitwell, though not a singular, was certainly rather a suspicious character, and there used to be many such about the Lakes. Being of the sect of the Gnostics, he seldom lost a bet, and never paid one; and as he was a better by profession, he lived on the spoil of simpletons. There was nothing, Sam said, like buying everything for ready money—and he had almost everything to sell—nor was he very particular about a license; but horses and carriages—some real, and most imaginary—constituted his chief stock in trade, with a few *bona fide* tenth-hand piano-fortes, a fiftieth-hand spinnet, and a couple of indisputable hurdy-gurdies that had made the tour of Europe. Sitwell and we were good friends enough, for he was really, after all, no such very unpleasant fellow—was uncommonly handsome, which is not a little in a man's favour as the world wags—nay, had even an *air distingué*—was never quarrelsome in our company, for which there might be

good reasons—and though his talk was about cattle, it was never coarse. Indeed, in that respect Mr Sitwell was a gentleman.

As soon as it was disseminated over the country, that we were to trot him for a hundred, the population was most anxious to know—on which Cob? And when Colonsay was announced, such was the burst of national enthusiasm, that we believe he would have been elected, had the choice of a champion out of the Six been decided by universal suffrage. In his powers the North of England reposed the most unquaking confidence —on the question of the direction of those powers, the North of England was abroad. His eccentricities he had taken no care to conceal; but many of them had been most erroneously attributed to his master. Rumour, with her hundred tongues, had, however, on the whole, done justice to his hundred exploits, though they, it was universally believed, were but inadequate exponents of his powers; while his powers, though gloriously expanded, appeared but to give intimation of his capacities,—of which numbers without number numberless—such was the not unorthodox creed of the Three Counties—were held to be folded up for future achievement and astonishment, within the compactest bulk in which horse had ever appeared on earth in quadrupedal incarnation.

He had been rather complaining for a fortnight past—and Betty Hawkrigg, the most scientific veterinary surgeon in the three northern counties, had within that time given him some powerful balls for what she learnedly called the mully-grubs. But on the Tuesday morning he was gay as a lark—"and as we looked there seemed a fire about his eyes." All that day Will Ritson, unknown to us, had kept absolutely cramming him with corn, which, considering that he had been taken off grass on the Saturday evening, was more kind than considerate; and on entering the stable to see his bed made for the night, you may, with a lively imagination, form some faint idea of our horror and astonishment as we beheld Colonsay, with his nose in a bucket, licking up the remains of a hot mess of materials, many of them to us anonymous, or worse than anonymous, which, at the commencement of his meal, had, we were credibly informed by a bystander, overflowed the vessel of administration. His sides were swollen as if they were at the bursting, and the expression of his countenance was decidedly apoplectic.

We did not see how we could much mend the matter by knocking down our training-groom; and the question was, were we to give the patient who to-morrow was to be the agent, a purge or an emetic. As there was no time to be lost—the start was to be at six—the former seemed the preferable plan; but was it practicable? No. No mixture could so move the iron stomach of Colonsay; and though it was admitted on all hands, that no drastic would much weaken him, yet 'twas judged prudent, under all the circumstances, not to disturb his bowels, and to leave nature to herself to get rid, before morning, in her own quiet way, of some portion at least of that ill-timed repletion. That this resolution was a wise one we soon found—for Ritson, by way of comforting us, and justifying himself, informed us, with a knowing smile, that he knew what he was about better than to give a horse a mash the night before a trotting-match for a hundred guineas, without putting into it as much doctor's stuff as would clear him out, by peep of day, as clean as a whistle. With this cheering assurance we went to bed, leaving orders that we should be called at five.

Our dreams were disturbed, and even monstrous. Now we were mounted on a serpent, that in mazy error strove to insinuate its giant bulk through a thicket, in pursuit of another reptile ridden by a wretch in scarlet, but was unable to progress after that amphisbæna dire, because of a huge knot in its belly, formed by an undigested goat, which it had swallowed, horns and all, the protruding points threatening to pierce the distension of its speckled skin, and one of them absolutely piercing it—and then a horrid gush of garbage and blood. Then we seemed to be——but, thank heaven, our nightmare was scared from our convulsed vehicle by the thunder of a charge of cavalry circling the house—and leaping from the blankets to the window, we had a glimpse of Colonsay, at the head of our Five Irongreys, as the living whirlwind was passing by, while the edifice shook from turret to foundation-stone—and then all again was still in the morning calm. Was this too a dream? The dewdrops, as they lay on the roses clustering round our latticed window, had that undisturbing and soul-satisfying beauty that belongs to the real world of life. So we huddled on our breeches, and out into the morning, without our braces, to penetrate into the heart of the mystery, and ascertain if this were indeed the

flesh and blood and bone Colonsay, or a grey phantom dappled by the dawn, to cheat imagination's eyes. It was the veritable and invincible Colonsay, who, somewhat blown, but very far from bursting, came galloping to us "on the front." He had let himself out of the unlocked stable, by lifting up the latch —*more majorum*—with that long upper lip of his, lithe as a proboscis, and as if prescient of the coming exploit that was casting its shadow before, had been taking his gallop with the squad to put himself into wind, and was now fit to trot against the steed that carried the old woman of Berkely, with a personage before her who at present shall be strictly anonymous, even though the goal were to have been in that place which nor poet nor preacher ever mentions before ears polite. We took him like Time by the forelock, and led him with outstretched neck to his stall, looking like a winner.

There is no treatise on training either of man or horse worth a dram. For our own parts we never ran a match on an empty stomach—and we never were so near being beat in our lives as in a four-mile race on Knavesmire by a Yorkshire clodhopper, who an hour before starting had breakfasted, as was his wont, on beans and bacon, and half a gallon of buttermilk. Ourselves alone, who heard it walloping and rumbling behind us, can conceive the nature of the noise in his stomach, on making play. Belshazzar, fools and knaves say, lost his race t'other month, by having been given a pail of water. Stuff! Had it been in him to win, he might have emptied a trough, and then dined upon the stakes. Here was Colonsay —three days only off grass that tickled his belly—allowed, we verily believe, during the Three Days in which a revolution was carried into effect in his metropolis, by Ritson to feed *ad libitum* out of the corn-chest—the lid having been taken off its hinges—mashed and physicked to an unknown extent at sunset—and lo! at sunrise, like a swallow, a lark, a pigeon, or a hawk, as gay, as lively, as agile, and as hungry—and yelling to be off and away like an eagle about to leap from the cliff and cleave the sky.

None but a fool will ride a trotting-match in a racing-saddle —or with any bit but a snaffle—let his nag's mouth be leather or lead. Our favourite saddle then was one that according to authentic tradition had belonged to the famous Marquess of Granby—and holsters and all weighed not far short of a couple

of stone. The stirrup-irons would have made a couple of three-pound quoits. Between pommel and peak, you sat undislodgably imbedded, and could be unhorsed but laterally—a feat, however, which Colonsay, by what we used to call the "swinging side-start," did more than once teach us, not only without difficulty, but with the greatest ease and alacrity to perform. No need for a crupper with such a shoulder as his, yet, to make assurance doubly sure, a crupper there was, attached to a tail that, ignorant of ginger, "wreathed its old fantastic roots so high," ominous of conquest. "Our bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne," as we showed what we once must have been, by vaulting like a winged Mercury into the Marquisate, and attended by our *posse comitatus*, proceeded towards the starting-post visible to the eyes of the cognoscenti, in the shape of an unelaborate milestone grey and green with the rust and lichens of years.

Attended by our *posse comitatus!* Why—look and behold! all the world and his wife. And not that worthy couple alone, but all the children. They want but somewhat higher cheek-bones to be as good-looking a people as the Scotch. What—pray—do you mean by the epithet *raw*—applied to bones? "Raw head and bloody bones," is not only an intelligible but picturesque expression; but we fear—thou Cockney—that in constantly saying "raw-boned Scotchman," thou pratest out of thy little primer. Our bones are not raw, so let us lay thee across our knee—with thy face to the floor. Hush! no crying—be mute as a marine under the cat. Now go home to your mamma—that is, your wife—and on showing her the broad-stone of honour, implore her, by her conjugal love and faith, to whisper in thy ear, whether it be bone of her bone that she weepeth to see so raw before her eyes, or flesh of her flesh.

But we have been digressing—and on our return see Sitwell in a wrap-rascal, mounted on a mouse of a thing—a lad leading the famous Shuffler mare in clothing, to the admiration of the assemblage. At a signal from his master, the imp undressed the Phenomenon, and there stood the spanking jade, in a Newmarket saddle not more than four pounds with all appurtenances—in beautiful condition—for the symptoms of Saturday had been all assumed for a blind—but without effect—for here it was diamond cut diamond—and Colonsay, though perhaps still a little purfled, and not sufficiently drawn up in

the flank, had manifestly made the most of the mash, and was in high spirits. No wonder indeed that he was more than usually elated; for we afterwards discovered that the humane and speculative Ritson, while we were taking breakfast, had given him the better portion of a quart of gin—mixed with water, it is true—beverage known by the appropriate name of half-and-half. He hardly condescended to look at the Shuffler—a single glance seemed to suffice to inspire our magnanimous animal with sentiments of consummate contempt for his spindle-shanked antagonist, who, though he possibly might have some speed, had obviously little or no bottom; nor were those sentiments moderated by the sudden transformation of Sitwell into a regular Newmarket jockey, booted, buckskin'd, jacketed, and capp'd—a very Buckle—shining in silk like a spotted leopard; and now mounted — though that was a fashion of his own—whip in mouth, with squared elbows and doubled fists, as if he were preparing to spar on horseback.

What a contrast did all this rodomontade, hectoring, and parade, on the part of him Samuel Sitwell, afford to the simple, almost bashful, bearing of us Christopher North! We rode in our mere Sporting-Jacket—and as we well knew there is no saying what a day may bring forth, we slung our fishing-basket on our shoulder, in one of our holsters stuck our fishing-rod and umbrella, and in the other—'twas its first season—up-fixed the Crutch. We are no enemy to knee-breeches—and pretty wear are white cords; but having in the course of our travels been on the Don, we experienced such pleasure in Cossacks, that our friend the Hetman—since the famous Platow—presented us with several pair, which we occasionally wear to this day—well known all over Scotland as North's Eternals. In the general agitation of that morning, our valet had forgotten to attach to our ankle-fringes our sole-straps, so that long before the play was over, the Russia-duck had wriggled itself up both legs alike, into a knob on either knee, that to appearance considerably impaired that symmetry for which even then our limbs continued to be eminently distinguished. The ducks were white as innocence, for they had been bleached on the sunny banks of lucid Windermere, and only the day before had been fondly imagined by a party of young ladies—Lakers from London—to be late-left patches of virgin snow. It was not till the maidens walked up to them,

that blushing they discovered their mistake—nor, had the party at the same time discovered what they really were, would it have been possible to analyse their emotions. The stockings in which we rode were worsted—rig-and-fur—and blue—and our feet were in high-lows laced with thunks. In summer we wear no waistcoat except the bosom-and-body-flannel-friend beneath our shirt, and our shirt, we need not say, was cerulean-check, for we had seen a little service at sea, and Pretty Poll with her own small fingers had figured our flowing collar. On the front of our japanned hat might be read in yellow letters—Nil Timeo; and thus equipped—sans spur, sans whip—for one spur in the head is worth two on the heel—tongue tells better than thong, and lip than leather—pretty well back in the saddle—knees in—heels down—and toes up—but that not much—with a somewhat stern aspect, but a loose rein, sat cock-a-hoop on Colonsay pawing in his pride, all that was mortal of Christopher North—sidey-for-sidey with the semblance of Sammy Sitwell and his mare Shuffler.

The spectacle was at once beautiful and magnificent. Far as the eye could reach, not a living thing was visible on the long line of road. But the walls and eminences all crowded, yet motionless, with life! What a confused brightness of bonnets—each with its own peculiar ribbon—the whole many-hued as our friend Mr Oliver's tulip-garden, now transferred as by magic to Newington from Canaan! A wondrous beauty is the beauty breathed all at once from thousands of beautiful faces, affecting the soul of a man as one beauty and as one face—till wavering—hovering for a while in sweet distraction along and over the whole lovely lines, and columns, and masses, and solid squares, he longs in ineffable and almost objectless desire among so many objects to take the million into his arms, and smother it with multitudinous kisses—leaving no lip untasted—and no eye untouched—a kiss comprehensive as conception—an embrace capacious as creation—when air, earth, and sea, are all three seen lying together diffused in one spirit—the serenity of elemental Love and primeval Peace!

Tents too—and flags flying from the apex of many a pyramid! Fruit and gingerbread stalls—and long lines of canvass-backed houses fitted up for shops! That is Sail Street—and

we smoke Blanket Square. O Vanity Fair! And is Christopher North the tutelary saint of this assemblage! Is he the loadstone that has attracted so many steel stays confining so many lovely bosoms! Yet 'twill be a happy holiday! and there will be wrestling in the ring—and the sun as he sinks will bid the moon rise to preside over innocent orgies—and the merry stars will join in the blue heaven the dancers on the green earth; and when the mirth and music all die—as die they must—the owls will toohoo the dawn—and the dawn will let drop her dews—and all Nature will be purely still as if all the dancing and deray of St Christopher's day, eve, and night, had been but the dream of a Shade!

Billy Balmer fired his signal pistol—and at the flash off we went like a shot. Yes! off we went—for Colonsay had not been expecting the thunder and lightning quite within an inch of his ear—and gave such a side-spang that he unhorsed us and we unhorsed Sitwell—while in the shock Shuffler was overthrown. Assuredly we had not laid our account with coming into such rude collision so early in the day, though we looked forward with confidence to much adventure and many events of that kind during the course of the match, and before sunset. Sam was a little stunned, and the mare did not seem to like it; but having been remounted we gave each other a nod—and again—but not in the same sense—were off! In the exultation of the moment, Billy shyed his beaver into the air, which, describing a parabola in its descent, just shaved Shuffler's nose, and made him swerve, till our off and Sam's near leg got rather awkwardly entangled; but having extricated our Cossacks from his rowel, we shoved him off to his own side: then, if not before, it may be safely said was The Start—and it was manifest to all the sporting spectators that the battle had begun. From the hubbub we gathered that with aliens Shuffler had rather the call—it might be guineas to pounds on the mare. We could not choose but smile.

For about a couple of hundred yards the course was down hill—and well down hill too—the fall being about a foot in the yard, which, though considerably off the perpendicular, you will find on trial to be still farther off the horizontal, at least very far indeed from being a flat. We had tossed up for the choice of the starting-post; and, having won, with a nice discrimination of the character of the cattle, we had fixed on the

milestone crowning the crest of the celebrated Break-Neck-Brae. The descent was at all times sprinkled with an excellent assortment of well-chosen acute-angled pebbles, from a pound weight up to half a stone; to pick his way among them would have been difficult to the most attentive quadruped even at a slow walk—at a fast trot impossible; and we frankly confess, that, though we were far from hoping it might happen, for that would have spoiled sport, we thought it not unlikely that Shuffler, who had been fired, and was rather bent in the knees—to say nothing of her hoofs, that had been so often pared that they reminded us of the feet of a Chinese lady of high rank—in coming down the hill would come down, in which event we could not but contemplate the painful probability of her breaking at once her own neck, and that of her master. As for Colonsay, his hoofs were of iron as well as his shoes. Among his innumerable accomplishments, he had never learned the art of stumbling; and you had but to look at his forehand to know that he would go to the grave without ever so much as once saying his prayers. Down Break-Neck-Brae we came clattering like slates down a roof—Shuffler rather in advance—for we lay by to see the fun, in case of a capsize; and a capsize there was, and such a capsize as has sent many an outrider to kingdom-come. After a long succession of stumbles—the whole series, however, being in fact but one long-continued and far-extended stumble—during which Sitwell, though he lost his stirrups, exhibited astonishing tenacity—Shuffler, staggering as if she had been shot, but still going on at no despicable speed, and struggling to recover herself like a good one as she was and nothing else, appeared to our dazzled optics to fling an absolute somerset, and to fall over the ditch—at that spot fortunately without anything that could be called a wall, though there was no want of the materials for one—into a field, which we knew by experience to be rather softish; for more falls of man and horse, separately or conjunctly, had occurred at that particular juncture of the road—a turn—than along the whole line, from Kendal to Keswick, and far more than the proportional number of deaths or killings on the spot. We would fain have stopped to ascertain whether or not the result had been fatal; but Colonsay seemed to think the accident in no way uncommon, and would not be prevailed on to slacken his

pace. We had now, to all appearance, the issue in our own hand; but we had, in our anxiety for Sitwell, forgotten the Cross Roads at Cook's House.

Yes—in our anxiety for Sitwell. Would you have had us pull up and ask him if he were dead? That would indeed have been humane; but what if we could not pull up—nor you either—had you been in our saddle, and instead of a Sumph a Sampson? This cant about cruelty is confined, we trust, to the pestilential coxcombs in whose cowardly and calumnious throats it must have been generated of spleen and bile. Fishing is cruel—hunting is cruel—racing is cruel—boxing is cruel—and pugilists are cut-throats. So writes the Grub Street liar. Christopher in his Sporting-Jacket is cruel—Christopher on Colonsay is cruel—Christopher with his crutch is cruel—Christopher in the Crow's Nest is cruel—in the Crow's Nest with Scoresby, keeping a look-out for icebergs, and gazing on cathedrals painted with a pencil that Turner's self might envy, by Frost on the polar sky!

Nobody with eyes in his head can have passed Cook's House without looking at it with pleasure; for there is a charm—though we know not well in what it consists—in its commonplace unpretending character—seated by the roadside, a little apart—with its back-garden of fruit-trees—and in front an open space flanked with an ample barn, and noways demeaned by one of the most comfortable pigsties that ever enclosed a litter of squeakers. Let the roads be as dusty as they can be, still you see no powder on those trees. And as for that meadow-field over the way—irrigated by a perennial rill that keeps for ever murmuring through the woods of St Catharine, below the shadow of the Giant of Millar Ground, and thence with many a lucid leap through the orchard behind the chapel-like farm-house on the lake-side into the quiet of Windermere—a lovelier meadow-field never adorned Arcadia in the golden age, nor yielded softer and greener footing to plume-pruning swan. A little farther on, and lo the Cross Roads! To the right the way up into Troutbeck—to the left to Bowness—as a sign-post—a sore perplexity to strangers—used of old to attempt to tell—by means of a ruined inscription on a rotten plank laughed at by the foliage of the living trees—a contrast between the quick and the dead. The bold breezes from Ambleside were wooing our forehead; but Colonsay, remembering

rack and manger in Mr Ullock's well-stored stable, *bolted*—and taking the bit in his teeth—by which he at once became independent, and changed his master into his slave—set off at a hand-gallop to the White Lion.

Now of all the Inns in England, the best then, as now—to us cheapest and also dearest of all—for there, at moderate charges, we got all a wise man could desire—was the White Lion of Bowness. Many a day—many a week—many a month—whole summers and winters—springs and autumns—years—decades—at a time—have we it inhabited—a private character in a public place—not there unhonoured, though as yet to the wide world unknown—unnoticed as a cloud among many clouds to and fro sailing day or night sky, though haply in shape majestic as any there—upturning its silver lining to the moon, or by the sun now wreathed into snow, now bathed in fire. But at that hour we had no business there—we knew even we should be unwelcome—for the village stood deserted by all but the houses, and they too had been at Orest-head had it not been for disturbing the furniture—the Tower did not like to leave behind the Church—the Church had business with the Pulpit—the Pulpit was overlooking the Desk—and the Desk busy in numbering the Pews. The White Lion continued to hold his mouth open, and his tail brandished, without an eye to look on him—rampant in vain—and had he even roared, he would have frightened only the sucking turkeys.

At this period of the match we have never been able to ascertain what was the true state of the betting, but we believe a considerable change took place in most men's books. There—as we were afterwards told—was Shuffler in no promising plight on the wrong side of the ditch, and Sam Sitwell in a state of insensibility, with his bared arm in possession of Mr Wright, the surgeon, whose lancet for a while failed to elicit a single drop of blood. The odds which a few minutes before had been guineas to pounds on Sam and Shuffler, changed with the group there to guineas to groats on Kit and Colonsay; but on the instantly subsequent bolting and disappearance of those heroes, they were restored to the former quotation, and then betting on all sides grew dull and died. The most scientific calculator was at fault with such data—at a loss, a positive nonplus; whether to back the wounded—perhaps dying—or the absent and certainly fled. Should Sam recover, and Shuffler, who

bled freely, be able to proceed—then, as they enjoyed the advantage of being on the spot, it was certain they would become favourites; for we, though fresh, were far off, and prudence declined speculating on the probable period of our revolution and return.

We indulged strong hopes that Colonsay, on the way to Bowness, would turn in to Rayrigg, by which we should save nearly a mile: nor were we disappointed; for, saving us the trouble of opening the gate, he put his breast to it, and we found ourselves at the door of that hospitable and honoured mansion. Most fortunately one of the young gentlemen was just mounting to ride to see the start—and having communicated to him the predicament in which we rode, we returned together to the scene of action—for a strong friendship had long subsisted between our steeds—and by the side of that chestnut, Colonsay trotted along as if the two had been in harness and followed by a phaeton. Loud cheers announced our approach—and there was Sam on Shuffler—somewhat more pale than wonted—and his head bandaged—but game to the back-bone, and ready for a fresh start. Having shortly expressed our satisfaction at reseeing him alive, we gave the office, and set off on the resumption of our match—and each of us feeling our resolution carried by acclamation, we both immediately made strong play.

The run from Cook's House to Troutbeck Bridge is a slight slope all the way—and there is not prettier ground in all England than that quarter of a mile, or thereabouts, for such a match as was now again in progress. The mare led—which was injudicious—but we have always suspected that Sam's wits were still a-wool-gathering in the meadow whereon he had had his fall. On approaching James Wilson's smithy, we heard the forge roaring, and saw the Shuffler cocking her ears as if she were going to shy. At that moment we were close on her left flank, and as she swerved from the flash of the furnace, we cried, "No jostling, Sam"—while Colonsay, impatient of the pressure, returned it more powerfully, and, in spite of all our efforts, ran the mare and himself in among a number of carts, waggons, and wheelbarrows, to say nothing of various agricultural instruments of a formidable character—more especially a harrow reared up against the cheek of the smithy door, fearfully furnished with teeth. This was rather

getting more than tit for tat, and Sam getting quarrelsome, nay abusive, we had to take our Crutch out of the holster, and sit on the defensive. Meanwhile, though the pace had slackened, we were still in motion, and, after some admirable displays of horsemanship on both sides, we got free from the impedimenta, and Colonsay led across, not—as we say in Scotland —*over* the bridge. We would have given a trifle for a horn of ale, at the Sun or Little Celandine, a public adjoining the smithy, and kept by Vulcan—and so we do not doubt would Sam, for the morning was hot, and told us what we might expect from meridian; but false delicacy prevented us both from pulling up, and the golden opportunity was lost. We exacted a promise from ourselves not to behave so foolishly—not to throw away our chance—on the next occasion that might occur for slaking our thirst. And we looked forward to Lowood.

One of the most difficult passages to execute in the whole course of the piece now awaited us at the gate of Calgarth-Park. Never once had we been able to induce Colonsay to give that gate the go-by; and we now felt him edging towards it—drifting to leeward as it were—anxious to cast anchor in some one of the many pleasant pastures embosomed in those lovely woods. But we had placed at the entrance a friend on horseback in ambuscade, who, the instant he saw our topping, was to sally out, and lead in the direction of the Grasmere Goal. This expedient Mr S. executed with his accustomed skill and promptitude, and his beautiful bit of blood being first favourite with Colonsay, the lure took to admiration, and we kept all three rattling along at a slapping pace,—the bay at a hand-gallop—not less than sixteen knots —up Ecclerigg Brow,—the mare sticking to us like wax. She seemed if anything to have the superior speed—but the horse was more steady—and below the shadow of those noble sycamores—as Sam was attempting to pass us—the Shuffler *broke!* We looked over our shoulder, and saw her turn as on a pivot—but before she had recovered her top speed, we were more than fifty yards in advance, and at that moment nothing could be brighter than our prospects—alas! soon to be overcast!

Half-way between Ecclerigg and Lowood, say one-third of the way nearer Lowood—is a piece of irregular unenclosed

ground—an oasis though surrounded by no desert—at that time not without a few trees, and studded with small groves of more beautiful broom than ever yellowed Fairy Land. Round it winds the road up to Briary-close, and away on by Brathwaite-fold to the mile-long village of Upper Troutbeck, at which painters have been painting for half a century and more, and yet have left unshadowed and unlighted ninety-nine parts in the hundred of its inexhaustible picturesque. On that shaded eminence had a division of the Egyptian army encamped—and lo! their tents and their asses! and hark, the clattering of pans! for the men, forsooth, are potters, and the women and children dexterous at the formation of hornspoons. One bray was enough—it did the business; in fear blended with disgust and indignation, Colonsay recoiled, and at full gallop flashed by the Shuffler, whom he met making up her lost ground, careless where he went, so that he could but evade that horrid bray; for, despite of the repeal of the Test Act, of all the horses we have ever known, he was the most intolerant of asses. It was not the blanket-tents that were to blame—nor was it the pans or kettles—least of all, the harmless hornspoons, or the innocent spoons of pewter. "We never taxed them with the ill that had been done to us"; it was that vile vicar—that base vicar of Bray—and his accursed curate—who stretched their leathern coats almost to bursting against us; and in the bitterness of our execration, we called on goddess Nature to strike the wombs of all the long-eared race with barrenness, that it might become obsolete on the face of the earth, and nought remain but its name, a term of reproach and infamy, with scorn accumulating on the hateful monosyllable Ass, till it should become unpronounceable, and finally be hissed out of the English language, and out of every other language articulated by the children of men.

And what, we think we hear you ask, what became of Us? For a season we know not, for the pace was tremendous—but had we been running parallel to the Liverpool and Manchester railroad, we had soon left out of sight the Rocket. Yet Colonsay, even in the agony of passion, never utterly forgot the main chance—and that with him was corn. Better corn than Mr Clerk's of Ecclerigg was not grown in Westmoreland. So he

"Leant o'er its humble gate, and thought the while,
O that for me some home like this might smile;
There should some hand no stinted boon assign
To hungry horse with terrors such as mine," &c.;

and without uttering these words, but signifying these sentiments by a peal of neighing, he forced his way into the court-yard, and soon brought the family to the door, whose amazement may be guessed on seeing us there, whom they had fondly believed far ahead of the Shuffler, on the Plateau of Waterhead!

A detachment of sons and servants was forthwith despatched to order or bribe the gypsies to strike their tents—though even in that event we doubted if any earthly inducement could persuade Colonsay to pass that haunted nook. Meanwhile, not to be idle, we took our seat, as requested, by the side of Mrs Clerk, and fell to breakfast with what appetite we might—nor was our appetite much amiss—and the breakfast was most excellent. Are you fond of pease-pudding? You are; then we need not ask your opinion of pork. Let no man kill his own mutton—let all men kill their own bacon—which, indeed, is the only way to save it. An experienced eye can, without difficulty, detect thirst even when disguised in hunger—and Mr Clerk nodded to a daughter to hand us a horn of the home-brewed. "Here's to the grey-coats and blue petticoats of Westmoreland!" and the sentiment diffused a general smile. We never desired to resemble that wild and apocryphal animal the Unicorn—so we did not confine ourselves to a single horn. We are not now much of a malt-worm—but every season has its appropriate drink—and ale is man's best liquor in the grand climacteric. 'Tis a lie to say then it stupifies any but sumphs. Hops are far preferable to poppies, in all cases but one—and that exception strengthens the general rule—we mean the case of the inimitable English Opium-Eater. Yet even in those days we could, against his Smyrnean laudanum, have backed our Ecclerigg ale. The horn that held it seemed converted into ivory and rimmed with gold. How it over-mantled with foamy inspiration! How sunk that dark but pellucid stream like music in the heart! What renovation! what elevation! what adoration of all that was mighty, and what scorn of all that was mean! "Rule—

rule, Britannia—Britannia, rule the waves!" That was the first song we voluntecred—and all the household joined in the chorus. Then sung we "Auld lang syne"—the only Scottish air popular, as far as we know, in the cottages of England—and it, we fear, chiefly because some of the words have to common and vulgar minds but a boisterous bacchanalian spirit—whereas, believe us, they are one and all somewhat sad—and the song may be sung so as to melt even a hard eye to tears.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast"—and though assuredly we did not seem, sitting there, to be on the fair way or the highroad to victory, something within us told us we should yet win the day. The whole family were equally confident of our ultimate success; and now a lassie from the oasis came to tell us that the gypsies, grieved to think it had caused our disaster, had removed their encampment — and were desirous to give us all the help in their power, should we think of attempting to get the grey horse past the braying-place. This was cheering intelligence; and Colonsay, having finished a feed of corn, when brought looked more than ever like a winner. Fortunately we thought at that moment of his predilection for side-saddles and horse-women; and having arrayed and burdened him accordingly—pretty Ella Clerk not refusing to try a canter—we led him snorting past the Oasis of Asses, and back again to the precise spot where he had made the wheel—and there, after gently assisting Ella of Ecclerigg to get down, and replacing the Marquess of Granby, we mounted incontinent, and again surrendered up our whole spirit to the passionate enthusiasm of the Match.

It was yet ten minutes to seven! Fifty minutes since starting had been consumed, and we had performed—we mean in the right direction—not much, if anything, above two miles! That seems no great going; yet the average rate had probably been about fifteen miles an hour—which if not great is good going—and not to be sneezed at, on one of his best ponies, by either Lord Caithness or the Duke of Gordon. For you must remember the primal fall at the beginning of all—which occupied, one way and another, several minutes—then there was the episode to Rayrigg — and the delay that occurred about the fresh—that is, the third start—at the Cross-Roads at Cook's House—then you must add something for the shying, and swerving, and shoving, at the smithy, and

for all that entanglement and extrication; and when to all these items you add the half-hour consuming and consumed at Ecclerigg, you will find that not more than eight minutes were occupied by positive match-trotting between the antique milestone where took place the first great original start, and the spot where occurred our latest disaster—if disaster it may be called, that led to a breakfast in one of the pleasantest cottages in Westmoreland,—close to the nearest ash-tree, on the left-hand side, to the Oasis of Asses—alias the Donkey's Isle.

Hitherto our mind had been so much engaged, that we had had neither time nor opportunity to observe the day—and knew little more of it than that it was dry, and dusty, and hot. Now—we fell not to such perusal of her face as we would draw it, but we chucked Miss Day under the chin, and looking up she acknowledged our courteous civilities with a heart-beaming smile! The Day was not comely only, but beautiful; never saw we before nor since more heavenly blue eyes, sunnier clouds of golden hair, or a nobler forehead ample as the sky. The weather was not dry—for there had been some rain during the early hours of the night, and its influence still lay on the woods, along with that of the morning dew. It was not dusty—how could it be, when every rill was singing a new song? If madmen will trot at the rate of fifteen miles an hour, and gallop at the rate of fifty, they will perspire; but their odious condition does not prove the air to be hot; and now, at seven of a midsummer morning, it was cool as that of a whole continent of cucumbers. Ah, far more than cool! We hear too much and too often of warm kisses; but the sweetest of all kisses in this weary world are the sweet, fresh, fragrant, almost, but not quite, cold kisses of those virgin twin-sisters, Air and Light.

Such, for a few moments, had been the innocent dalliance of Aurora Day with Christopher North, when the eyes of that amorist caught a peep of Lowood; and over its then proud lake-side pine-grove, now ruefully thinned, and the two or three remaining trees, the ghosts of what they were—and the worst of all ghosts are the dead alive—bower-embosomed halfway up its own sylvan hill, the delightful Dove Nest. Collected in front of the Inn, a vast crowd! and in the midst of it—as sure as that China oranges are cheap in Pekin—Sam Sitwell, on

Shuffler, ready to start! We felt we could afford to ride up to him—and, besides, we were curious to hear him prate of his hereabouts. Could it be that he was on his return from the goal at Grasmere? No. But we soon had a solution of the mystery—or, rather, except to ourselves there was no mystery at all. For, having met us flying home, as he was entitled to believe, at the rate of a young hawk's flight, Sam, who had not then recovered the effects of that ugly fall, wisely decided to breakfast at Lowood. And, according to his account, which we fully credited, Mrs Ladyman had given him a superb *déjeûné à la fourchette*. Shuffler had all the while stood at the door feeding kindly out of a nose-bag, to be ready at the first symptom of our return; and never saw we so great a change wrought in so short a time, by judicious treatment, as well on man as on horse. Sam was quite spruce—even pert—and rosy about the gills as an alderman. As for Shuffler, we could have thought we saw before us Eleanor herself, had that glorious creature, who was then carrying everything before her, plates, cups, and all, not been of a different colour. Yet we were proud to find that Christopher on Colonsay divided the popular admiration, and as the rivals shook hands, a shout rent the sky.

We now remembered that it was Grasmere Fair-day, which accounted for the crowd being greater than could have been brought together perhaps even by the bruit of our match. There could not have been fewer than a thousand souls, and the assemblage began to drop off towards Ambleside. It could not but occur to our humane minds that the lieges would be subjected to great peril of life, were we to start at score, and make play through the fragments of that crowd. And start at score and make play we must, if we were now to resume the contest, for our cattle were pawing to be let go, and you might read desperate thoughts in the faces of the riders. Hitherto the struggle had been severe, though it had not been throughout exactly a neck-and-neck affair: it was now a near thing indeed, for if we had been delayed half an hour in Ecclerigg, so had Sitwell in Lowood; and though nothing had occurred to us so personally painful as his accident, we had had severer Trials of Temper. In suffering as in patience we might be fairly enough said to have been on a par.

At that moment a beautiful breeze, that had been born at the head of Langdale, came carolling and curling across the Lake, and met another as beautiful as itself from Belle-Isle, so lovingly that the two melted into one, and brought the Endeavour suddenly round Point-Battery, with all sails set, and all colours flying, a vision glorifying all Lowood Bay. Billy Balmer, all the while holding the rim of his hat, advocated most eloquently a proposal emanating from mine host, that the nags should be stabled for an hour or two, and that we should give Mr Sitwell a sail. Indeed, he began to drop hints that it would be easy by signal to collect the whole musquito fleet; and his oratory was so powerful that at the close of one of his speeches—in reply—we verily believed that a Trotting-match between horses was about to be changed into a Regatta like that of Cowes.

And a regatta there is, at bidding of the Invisibles of air, whose breath is on the waters, now provided with a blue ground, whitening with breakers, commonly called cat's-heads. Five minutes ago, what shadowy stillness of vacant sleep—now what sunny animation of busy lifeiness all over face and breast of Winander! What unfurling, and hoisting, and crowding of canvass "in gentle places, bosoms, nooks, and bays!" and, my eye, how every craft cocks her jib at the Endeavour! That is the Eliza—so named after one of the finest women in England—since christened the "Ugly Cutter" by some malignant eunuch, squeaking the lie as he broke a vinegar cruet on her bows. That schooner is the Roscoe—and Lorenzo was then alive with "his fine Roman hand" and face; and so was Palafox, whose name that three-masted lateen-rigged beauty bears—see how, with the wind on her beam, like a flamingo she flies! Yet she cannot overhaul the Liverpoolian—though that Wonder has not yet shaken out two reefs in her mainsail that tell a silent tale of yesterday's squalls. *Is! was!* what a confusion of moods and tenses! But the Past is all one with the Present. Imagination does what she likes with Time; she gives a mysterious middle voice to every verb—and genius pursues them through all their conjugations, feeling that they have all one root—and that the root of the Tree of Knowledge, of Good and of Evil—planted in the heart, and watered sometimes with dewdrop-looking tears, and as often with tears of blood!

And lo! beauty-laden—a life-boat indeed—behold the Barge! The Nil Timeo!—Old Nell, as she is lovingly called by all the true sons of Winander! The Dreadnought and Invincible Old Nell Nil Timeo! No awning but one of parasols! Herself seemingly sunk by fair freight and bright burden down to the rowlocks, but steady in her speed as a dolphin; and is she not beautifully pulled, ye Naiads? The admiral's gig resplendent now among a fleet of wherries, skiffs, canoes; and hark—while the female voices that can sing so divinely are all mute—swelling in strong heroic harmony the Poet Laureate's Song!

For ages, Winander, unsought was thy shore,
Nought disturb'd thy fair stream save the fishermen's oar,
Nor freighted with charms did the gay painted boat
To the soft beat of music triumphantly float;
When the Goddess of Love
View'd the scene from above,
And determined from Cyprus her court to remove;
Then selected a few, who were skilful and brave,
Her daughters to guard on the Westmoreland wave.

Though for far distant regions we ne'er set our sails,
Thy breast, O Winander! encounters rude gales;
When the swift whirlwind rushes from Langdale's dark form,
E'en the weather-worn sailor might start at the storm:
Yet in vain yields the mast
To the force of the blast
Whilst the heart to the moorings of courage is fast;
And the sons of Winander are skilful and brave,
Nor shrink from the threats of the Westmoreland wave.

To us are consign'd the gay fête and the ball,
Where beauty enslaves whom no dangers appal;
For when she submission demands from our crew,
"*Nil timeo*" must yield, conq'ring Cupid, to you.
Then, alas! we complain
Of the heart-rending pain,
And confess that our motto is boasting and vain;
Though the sons of Winander are skilful and brave,
Their flag must be bow'd to the gems of the wave.

To us it is given to drain the deep bowl,
The dark hours of midnight thus cheerfully roll;

Our captain commands, we with pleasure obey,
And the dawning of morn only calls us away.
On our sleep-sealed eyes
Soon soft visions arise,
From the black fleet of sorrow we fear no surprise,
For the sons of Winander are joyous and brave,
As bold as the storm, and as free as the wave.

Whene'er we pass o'er, without compass, the line,
'Tis friendship that blows on an ocean of wine ;
The breakers of discord ne'er roar on the lee,
At the rudder whilst love, wine, and friendship agree :
Then let us combine
Love, friendship, and wine,
On our bark then the bright star of pleasure shall shine ;
For the sons of Winander are faithful and brave,
And proud rides their flag on the Westmoreland wave.

And now "sharpening its mooned horns," the whole Fleet close inshore drops anchor; and all the crews give Christopher three cheers. If this be not a regatta, pray what is a regatta? Colonsay paws the beach as if impatient to board the Flag-Ship like a horse-marine. The Shuffler draws up in style on our right flank—"Steady, Sam! Steady!" Billy applies a red-hot poker to the touch-hole of the pattareroe—and in full view of the Fleet—AGAIN WE START.

CHRISTOPHER ON COLONSAY.

FYTTE II.

[JULY 1834.]

The sharp quadruplications of Colonsay's incomparable hoofs tooling along the crown of the road, clattered from the cliffs among the echoes of the pattareroe, while the Shuffler, studious of the turf, pitched out in high style, noiseless as a deer on the heather—and thus neck and neck at the rate of sixteen miles an hour, we wheeled round Lowood Bay, leaving behind us the Regatta like a dream. Yet fragments of the vision seemed to float on along with us, lustrous at intervals through openings among the trees, and with our pride of horsemanship was blended a sense of beauty in the fleeting groves. Fields with pasturing and ruminating cattle seemed swimming away southward, and idle horses neighed to us over hedges, and in an instant were gone. We saw Sammy by our side as if we saw him not; for our eyes—with our whole heart, soul, and mind concentrated in the dilated orbs—were now fixed between those long ears, laid back like those of a hare before greyhounds up a hill, and we became a Trot. Oh! that the universe could have beheld us! Such was the vainglorious wish of one then imagining himself more than immortal—when, without one preparatory motion indicative of his purpose, off at right angles flew Colonsay, in ultra-gallop up the formidable avenue to Dove's Nest, shaving a jaunting-car full of parasolled people on their way down to the low country—and then quiet on the flat before that domicile as an expired whirlwind. There he stood smelling the turf, but not grazing—licking the moist herbage with his foot-long tongue! Our presence of mind and decision of character had even in those days become proverbial, and we ordered a wondering lad, who came to the barn-door with his strawy hair on end, instantly

to bring a pail of meal-and-water. We sympathised with our noble steed—for we knew by experience how intolerable is extreme thirst. Up to his eyes in the pail, what power of suction he displayed! The mealy surface of the delicious draught descended in rapid ebb; and then upsetting the tub —for it was a tub—playfully with his snorting nose—he put about quick as the Liverpoolian herself on the liquid element —and down that almost perpendicular approach—or rather reproach to the vanished House—he re-flew—as if the devil had been chasing him—which perhaps he was—and we heard and felt by the crashing that we were now driving our way through a wood. *Facilis descensus Averni!* we inly breathed. For missing that sharpest of all turns, he had forsaken the avenue, and, demented, was taking a short cut to the highroad. But though a short cut, it was a severe one; for we knew the ground well, having traversed it often in the season of woodcocks, and to effect a footing on the turnpike, it was necessary to leap over an old lime-kiln, from the level thereof, somewhere about twenty feet high! Colonsay knew nothing of the danger, till he was within a few yards of the brink; and had his heart failed him, we should have been mummies. But with a suppressed shriek *he took it*—while a Quaker with his wife and family from Kendal, in a one-horse gig, beheld overhead in the air a Flying Dragon. Oh! the stun! The soles of our feet felt driven up into the crown of our head, while we saw nothing but repeated flashes of lightning—and then what mortal sickness! Staggering and shivering like a new-dropt foal was poor Colonsay now, hardly able to sustain our weight—and our belief is that both of us must have swooned. On recovering some of our senses, sorely perplexed were we to make out the meaning of that enormous brim—that measureless breadth of beaver that seemed to canopy us like a dingy sky. Slowly it grew into the hat—head—and face of the most benevolent of brethren—for Isaac Braithwaite was fanning us with his George Fox; and his two lovely daughters, calm in their compassion—demure even in their despair—were standing beside him; while Agatha, sweetest sister of charity, was upholding in her lily hand a horn-cup of cordial, which, soon as it touched our lips, diffused through our being a restoration that reached the very core of our heart. "Friend Christopher, thou art pale! how feelest thou?" said a sweet low voice.

"Not paler than thy hand, thou ministering angel." No smile met our reply—and verily it was a vain one—for her ear was unacquainted with compliments, and familiar at all times with the language and the tones of truth. No questions were asked whence we came, though to them it must have been a mystery, nor why in such fashion; but on our faintly murmuring that we were engaged in a trotting match, the family looked at one another, and we understood the piteous expression of their eyes. "I fear thou art feverish, Christopher, and thou hadst better take thy place in our vehicle," said Isaac; but our recovery had been almost as rapid as our decline and fall—we were conscious of the return of the roses to our cheeks—Colonsay was again firm on his feet—and we promised to join our friends at some refreshment in the inn at Grasmere. Our hat had been left on some tree in the wood, and the cloudless sun, now advanced in heaven, smote our aching temples. The family pitied our plight, and Isaac, the good Samaritan, without saying a word, put his beaver on our head; and at that moment, Colonsay, fresh as a two-year-old, shot forwards, casting up a not unamused eye on his master, metamorphosed into a Broadbrim, and presenting the appearance of an at once venerable and dashing Quaker.

No symptom of Shuffler—but gathering the shore, lo, the Barge! We were now racing the Nil Timeo—"with all her crew complete." How beautifully regular to time the level flashes of the magnificent Ten-oared! Billy—star of steersmen—lying in the stern-sheets—and at every long pull, strong pull, and pull altogether, bending forwards, and retracting his body—to give "Old Nell" an impulse; but the Green Girl of Windermere heeded it not, and beautifully bore along with her all her shadowy pomp, burnishing the bays, and kindling up with her far-felt beauty all the broad bosom of the lake. There sat the Stewartsons, and the Robinsons, and the Dixons, and the Longs, a strong and skilful brotherhood, that would have pulled victoriously against any admiral's gig in the service—had the race been even three leagues out and in, with a stormy sea. But now all was calm as bright—and soon subsided the troubled beauty in her wake—leaving no visible pathway on the diamond deep. From her stern towered a living Thistle—for Westmoreland in those days was part of Scotland—and "NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSET" was the sentiment

peacefully breathed from every prickly flower resplendent on a Plant, that in its stateliness deserved to be called a Tree.

But what crowd of cattle is this? A drove of kyloes! If you try to count them, it must be not by scores, but hundreds. Their lowing announces their country—and even from such lips how pleasant to our ears the Scottish accent! They are all Highlanders—every mother's son of them—and are *rowting* Gaelic. Black the ground of the living mass, spotted and interlaced with brown—and what a forest of horns! We thought for a moment of a thousand red-deer once seen by us suddenly at sunrise rousing themselves among the shadows of Ben-y-Gloe! A majority of the kyloes were standing—but a more than respectable, a formidable minority, were lying on the road—and from their imperturbable countenances it was manifest that the farthest idea in this world from their minds was that of rising up—many chewing the cud. Like Wellington in the centre of a solid square at Waterloo—though that coming event had not then cast its shadow before—sat Sammy Sitwell on Shuffler. It was impossible that he could have wedged himself into the position he now occupied—and we saw that he had been gradually surrounded—till he now shone conspicuous as the Generalissimo of the Drove.

"Got pless your honour—Got pless your Grace," ejaculated three stalwart Celts, brown on the face as gypsies, but with bold blue eyes, suddenly illumined with the poetry and the patriotism of the heather hills; and who were they but Angus of Glen-Etive and his twins! Last time we shook hands with them 'twas on the bridge—a single tree—a pine—across that chasm, up whose cataract the salmon, like a bent bow, essays to leap in vain, though fresh from Connal's roaring eddies, and strong with the spirit of the sea. "A ponny loch, your honour—a ponny loch—but what's it tae the Yetive, your honour—and what's thae hillocks tae the Black Mount, your honour? But you'll no refuse *tastin a drop o' the unchristened cretur—sma' still—oh, but yon's a prime worm!*" And unbuckling a secret belt round his waist, he handed it up to us, nor were we slow to apply the mouth of the serpent to that of the dragon.

> "And all did say, Beware! Beware!
> His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
> Weave a circle round him thrice,

And close your eyes with holy dread ;
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drank the milk of Paradise."

Meanwhile the plot began to thicken, for our friends in the gig came up, and likewise two post-shays with lakers from Bowness. Multitudes of people, of all ages and sexes, were, of course, fast congregating ; and on the other side of Waterhead turnpike gate, there were various arrivals of equipages —foreign and domestic—all at a stand-still. Some dispute having arisen, the tollman had shut the gate, so almost every imaginable kind of impediment was placed in the way of the match. After an exchange of mulls and spleuchans, we communicated to our countrymen the situation of affairs, and gave them a slight sketch of the character of Colonsay, including his birth and parentage—on which they offered to back us against "the Merry-Andrew in the middle" a score of kyloes to a calf. Angus whispering into our ear to follow him, and Donald and Hamish taking their stations like henchmen, one at each side of Colonsay, they all three began belabouring with their rungs the hurdies of the kyloes, till they opened out a lane for us to advance, as at an ovation. Sam's situation became more dangerous and desperate than ever from the pressure of the bestial—and a couple of the most diminutive having got below Shuffler's belly, hoisted her up, so that she must have appeared to the spectators in the galleries to be attempting to scramble her way over the heads of the population in the pit. But the gate, you will remember, was shut, and the old soldier was inexorable. A nondescript vehicle, drawn by four asses, had resisted tollage, and Wooden-leg swore they might remain there till sunset. Seeing all argument was lost upon a man with a single idea, we gave a hint to Ned Hurd, who made a pair of clean heels to and from Mr Jackson's of Waterhead, bringing with him a blind sieve of oats. Cautioning Ned to keep at a safe distance, we directed the attention of Colonsay to the feed ; and then, backing him to the rough edge of kyloes, we nodged him with our knee, and slacking rein, charged the Pike. He cleared it as clean as if he had been in shafts ! The discharge of a whole park of artillery would have been a pig's-whisper to the human roar that then rent the sky.

We are at all times loth to indulge in self-laudation ; yet

we feel that we shall be pardoned for saying that there are few men who, had they been in our situation, would not have trotted onwards without wasting a thought on Sam. But we were of a nobler nature. Inextricably entangled among the kyloes, he had not now a chance. It was clear to the most prejudiced observer that we had the race in our own hand. But with a magnanimity deserving this record, we turned about on the saddle and made a speech. Its main purport was a proposal to allow him ten minutes for extrication from his present entanglement; and we concluded with an offer, that thenceforth the parties were to make their way at their own pleasure to Grasmere—without regard to any general or particular road—so that we kept to the trot. Nay, we proposed that on all occasions when either or both of us might chance to be going in a direction unequivocally devious from the turnpike road, either or both might gallop. Sam said it was all fair—and so it was; for though the Shuffler was the faster galloper of the two, having been a plate mare, Colonsay knew the country better—and we had never known him, in his wildest vagaries, get himself into a *cul-de-sac*.

All this while we had utterly forgotten what was on our head. Nor should we have remembered it now, had not a bright lady flung a kiss to us from her palm out of a carriage window, when with a bow, uncovering "our grey discrowned head," we beheld in our right hand the extraordinary concern to which at the moment we were unable to give a name, and had but a dim apprehension of its nature and office. The truth, however, soon dawned upon us, and we delivered it to Angus, who did not venture to form any conjecture respecting its material or functions, with a request that he would transmit it to the legitimate owner in the gig—which he did with the assistance of the Twins, and to the astonishment of the whole drove. We then bound round our temples a pink silk handkerchief, half day and half night cap, with the fringe nattily coming to a point between our shoulders—and looked—so said Ned Hurd—prepared for mischief. Though much drops out between the cup and the lip, it was not so now with Colonsay. The meal-and-water at Dove's Nest, in quenching his thirst had excited his hunger—and Ned, taking the bit out of his mouth, presented him the sieve full of seed-oats, beautiful as eggs in an ant-hill. Not to seem singular, we too

lunched; for we never leave home without a newspaper of ham sandwiches, and the "mountain-dew" had "waukened that sleeping dowg," our dormant appetite.

Seldom have we enjoyed ten minutes of more delightful repose. "The innocent brightness of the newborn Day" was growing into splendid Forenoonhood—with a richer array both of lights and shadows. The eye did not miss the dewdrops, so bright had they left the green earth on their evanishing to heaven. "Our heart rejoiced in Nature's joy"—and as for Windermere, she would not have changed places with the sky. Nor had she any need to do so; for she and the sky now seemed one—and the two, blended together, forgot their own identity in a common world of clouds. Not clouds of vapour, but clouds of light! Alike celestial the purity of the radiant whiteness and of the lucid azure, attempered to perfect harmony as by an angel's breath!

And did Imagination so prevail over the senses, that we saw nothing else there among air and water, trees and clouds, but the imagery of her own creations? Now and then a visionary minute was indeed wholly a dream. But gleamings came between of fair realities before our outward eyes, for Windermere now bore on her bosom a hundred sail. It seemed as if a Flight of Swans had dropped upon the lake, and after their aerial voyage were wantoning in the still purer element, that wooed their now folded and their now expanded wings. Nor when they were seen to be what they were—not swans, but barks—were they in that disenchantment less beautiful; for they still seemed instinct with spirit—to obey no will but their own—to enjoy each other's joy—meeting and parting to give salutes and farewells—in their loveliness to be capable of love—to admire their own motions, as by a sense of the grace accompanying them all—to feel the charm of the shifting scene they kept in perpetual animation, and to be inspired by the poetry of the many-figured evolutions performed as by magic at the bidding of a breeze or a breath!

See! the wide lake is like two lakes separated by a line of light! Beyond the line is the blue region of the zephyrs, whitened by little breakers—and as the Fleet, with all canvass set, is beating up to windward, the air is streamered with flags. Between the line and the shore 'tis a perfect mirror—

and becalmed there the sail-boat seems at anchor, and to envy skiff and canoe as they steal by and around her with twinkling oars. Yonder all the animation of a waking world! There the repose of slumber! Here the rest of sleep! And now currents of air come creeping over the clear calm — and breathless spots appear upon the blue breeze till the prevailing character of each is impaired—the line of separation broken—and the two lakes, as fancy had chosen to see them, are recreating themselves into one, till all disorder subsides, and settles down into perfect harmony—and the gazer's heart feels that of all the waters beneath the sun, assuredly, on such a day as this, the loveliest is Windermere!

The ten minutes—but two—had now expired, and a sudden thought struck us in connection with the everyday world, which might turn to good account, viz., to purchase a score of kyloes, to be summered on Applethwaite common—a common then, apparently without stint or measure, open to the whole world. We always are our own stake-holder—so we forked out the blunt in the shape of five twenty-pound Bank of England notes (the rest in gold remained in our fob), and putting them into Angus's hairy paw, told him to leave in the red-gated field near Orrest-head kyloe-flesh of that value, as we had implicit confidence in his integrity and judgment. Angus whispered in our ear that we should be no losers by the bargain, for that he would so arrange matters that the gentleman in the blue-silk jacket did not lose his situation till well on in the afternoon. There Sammy sat like "Impatience on a monument, scowling at grief." Time having been called, we pulled Colonsay's nose from the sieve, and hitting him on the rump a thwack with the Crutch, away we went, amidst loud cheers, on a new career of discovery and adventure.

Near the turnpike gate at Waterhead, the tourist cannot have failed to observe that from the highroad a low road diverges along the lake-side, and is soon lost to sight between two comfortable houses with their appurtenances and a multitude of stone walls. For a hundred yards or thereabouts the two roads are separated by some unenclosed ground, of an irregular shape, on which there was then, and may be now, a saw-pit, and generally a quantity of planks set up to season or to be ready for shipment. Along this piece of common Colonsay now took his way, not having

made up his mind which of the two roads he was to take,—the upper road, leading direct to Ambleside—or the lower road, leading, though not so direct, to Langdale. Now Ambleside lies between Waterhead and Grasmere—whereas Langdale-head is at least ten miles, as the bird flies, in an opposite direction entirely; so you can easily conceive our anxiety respecting his ultimate decision. For the first fifty yards our politician adhered to the *juste milieu*, and we became apprehensive, that if he proceeded on that course without turning either to the right or the *extrême gauche*, that he would carry us slap-bang into the saw-pit; while, again, were he to apostatise to either one side or another, we saw not how we could escape running foul of a pile of planks. Into the pit, which, though not bottomless, was deep, he seemed resolved to go—why, we could not conjecture—as it was not reasonable to suppose that, immediately after lunching on oats, he could have any very urgent desire to dine on sawdust. The pit was unoccupied; for those top-sawyers, Mr Woodburn and his son, had gone to Grasmere fair—and so had the Hartleys. It had a sloping approach or entrance; and to our discomfiture, and we need hardly say to the astonishment of the people, Colonsay trotting in with us, horse and rider disappeared, as it were, into the bowels of the earth! There he stood as in a stall, snuffing in vain for rack or manger. On looking up, we saw many faces looking down, and we confess that we felt shame, which has been beautifully called "the sorrow of pride." We were in a sort of grave, and almost wished to be buried. It was too narrow to admit of his turning, and no power of persuasion could induce him to back out. We heard voices above suggesting the possibility of hoisting us up by ropes, but we were convinced that Colonsay would not suffer ropes to be passed for that purpose round his barrel. He would have spurned at such an indignity with all his hoofs. Besides, where was the tackle or machinery sufficiently strong to reinstate him on the surface? In this emergency, Billy left the Barge, and came to our assistance with his sage counsel. He remembered hearing Jonathan Inman say, two years before, that he had seen Colonsay, who used to wander by moonlight all over the country, at the grey of dawn going into that self-same pit,

and that his curiosity having been awakened, he, Jonathan, had looked down upon him, Colonsay, and observed him devouring a bundle of rye-grass and clover, which it is supposed some tinker had cut, and deposited therein as a place of concealment, to be ready for use on next day's encampment. The remembrance of that feast had been awakened in his mind by the associating principle of contiguity of place, and thus did Billy philosophically explain the phenomenon. Oats had lost their allurement, for our Cob, like Louis the Fourteenth and his Father Confessor, could not stomach *toujours perdrix ;* so a scythe was procured, and a sheaf did the business. To the delight of the multitude, he and we reappeared stern foremost, and as we saw Sammy still safe among the kyloes, we allowed our friend, who, though a great wit, had a long memory, to take his fresh forage at his leisure. There was a tremendous row at the turnpike-gate—for the foreigners in the ass-drawn nondescript had got out and shown fight. The clamour had frightened the kyloes, who no longer preserved close order, and from the broken square, now canopied with a cloud of dust, issued the Shuffler—Sam making strong play, and to avoid the crowd of carriages, down the low road. There was manifestly a strong struggle in Colonsay's mind between the love of clover and the love of glory, but the latter high active principle prevailed over the low appetite—and off he clattered in his grandest style after the mare—this being perhaps, considered merely in a sporting light, the most interesting era of the match. The public anxiety was wound up to the intensest pitch—no odds could be got from the adherents of either party—and two to one were eagerly offered, that we reached Grasmere — five miles — before one o'clock. It was now nine by the shadow on that unerring sundial, Loughrigg-Fell.

We do not know that we are personally acquainted with a more trying bit of road, for such a Cob as Colonsay, than that which, in days of yore, *ran* between Waterhead and Rothay bridge. We allude not to what are called the sharp turns, though the angles formed there by stone-walls were acute indeed, especially in the coping, sometimes consisting of slate that might have served for the shaver of a guillotine ; nor to the heaps of stones that used to accumulate mysteriously for

inscrutable purposes by the sides of ditches, deep enough to be dangerous, without such supererogatory cairns, though it does seem a hard case to have your skull fractured before you are drowned; nor yet to the gable-ends of man-houses, hog-houses, and barns, that suddenly faced the unsuspecting traveller, with a blank yet bold look, without door or window, that said, or seemed to say, "Thus far, and no farther, may'st thou go;"—but we are meditating now on the vast variety of field-gates, most of them well-secured, we acknowledge, but still many of them left open by stirk or laker, and giving glimpses of pasturage, at sight of which the most stoical steed, however apathetic to ordinary temptations, could not but be seized with an access of passion, hurrying him away into headlong indulgence, to the oblivion of all other mortal concerns—and especially are we meditating on one gate, appropriately called the Wishing-Gate, in a wall encircling a plain, in the centre of which that wonderful people, the Romans, had built a camp. Often had it been our lot to accompany aged antiquaries into that interesting plain, to assist their eyes to trace those invisible military remains; and on such occasions Colonsay employed himself in eating away the grass that now smiled on peaceful mounds, which once, 'tis said, were warlike ramparts. As he had never one single time, during his residence in Westmoreland, gone by that gate without first going through or over it, how could we hope that he would now so far deviate from his established practice, as to continue his career, without paying a visit to his favourite intrenchments, haunted, though he knew it not, by the ghost of Julius Cæsar?

How best to guard against that danger our mind was occupied in scheming, during the close contest on the difficult bit of road now sketched; and we could think of none better than "the good old plan" of sticking close to the Shuffler's offside at the approaching crisis, certain that if Colonsay did bolt—and here it was with him a general rule, admitting of no exceptions—he would carry the mare along with him into the Roman Camp. There was the Wishing-Gate, not twenty yards ahead of us—shut and padlocked—and apparently repaired—or rather, as it seemed, speck-and-span new—though luckily there was nothing new about it but the paint. Up to this time we had had no opportunity, except among the kyloes,

to enter into conversation with Sam; but now, to throw him off his guard, we became talkative—saying, as we laid ourselves alongside of him, "Pray, Sitwell, what is your opinion of things in general?" But ere he could answer that simple query, crash—smash went the Wishing-Gate before a side-long charge of cavalry, and in full career,

"Shouldering our crutch, we show'd how fields were won."

Old Hutton of Birmingham—though in his dotage he forgot to mention it in his Memoirs—was sitting on a portable stool erected on an eminence—reconstructing the circumvallation. Providentially we saw him when about three yards—and so did Colonsay, who took him so easily that we felt no change in the gallop, nor did the antiquary stir from his tripod. In such cases apologies are foolish, so in good time we removed any unpleasant impression our conduct might have made on the good old man's mind, by painting to him, in words brighter than oils, a picture of the Camp on the very day it was brought to a perfect finish—and a sketch of the review of the troops that took place that afternoon in the vale of Ambleside. "Here, my dear sir," said we—"here stood the Prætorian guard—there"—but at that moment we espied Sam on the Shuffler, making for the ruins of the Wishing-Gate, and appealed with hand and heel to Colonsay, if he had the heart to leave his master in the lurch? Luckily the heads of a number of umpires and referees were seen not far in the rear, bobbing above the enclosure walls; and the love of society, as strong in man as in horse, instigated him to join the cavalcade, which pulled up on our approach—and the match was resumed, if possible with redoubled vigour. We could not but feel grateful to Colonsay, and resolved not to baulk him of any other enjoyment, however ill-timed it might at first sight appear, which he might be promising himself at some subsequent season of the struggle. Allowances were to be made on both sides—we had our weaknesses and peculiarities too—one good turn deserves another—and as he pitched out, we patted him on the neck as tenderly as a mother pats her child.

We had not proceeded above a hundred yards, fast gathering the Shuffler, till we heard before us, behind us, and around us, loud cries of mysterious warning and alarm—and saw men

in shirts waving their arms, with expressive but unintelligible gesticulations not a little appalling—yet mysterious terror is unquestionably one chief source of the sublime. "A blast! a blast!" and the truth flashed upon us with the explosion. Fragments of rock darkened the air, and came clattering in all directions, curiously pointed, of smoking flint. How the coping stones whizzed from the walls! To shivers flew part of a slate-fence within five yards of us, smitten by a forty-two pounder, that buried itself in the dirt. Under a heavy fire let no man bob his head, duck down, or run away. We had learnt that lesson from much reading on war—and Colonsay had been taught it by instinct—so we carried on, and were soon out of range. But neither Sam nor the Shuffler could stand such a cannonade, and were off at the anonymous pace—across Rothay-bridge, and away to Clappersgate—a circuitous way to Grasmere, by which the most sanguine spirit could hardly hope for ultimate success. And what if, in his imperfect acquaintance with the country, he should get into Little Langdale, and so over Hard-knot and Wrynose into Eskdale, and then by Barnmoor Tarn into Wastdale-head.

There are many much more beautiful bridges in Westmoreland than Rothay-bridge—we could mention a hundred—but than the Vale of Ambleside, on which it stands, a much more beautiful vale—nay, one half as beautiful—is not in the known world. Wonderful how, without crowding, it can hold so many groves! Yet numerous as they are, they do not injure the effect of the noble single trees planted by the hand of nature, who has a fine eye for the picturesque, just where they should be, in the meadows kept by irrigation and inundation in perennial verdure that would shame the emerald. The only fault, easily forgiven, that we could ever find with the Rothay herself, is, that she is too pellucid—for she often eludes the sight, not when hidden, as she sometimes is, in osiers, and willows, and alders, but when, in open sunshine, singing her way to the Lake. Colonsay paused on the bridge, that we might admire our beloved panorama; and we requested one detachment to follow our antagonist, and the main body of umpires and referees to proceed to Ambleside—for we wished for a while to be alone, and feed on the prospect. Colonsay, left to himself, opened the gate adjoining the ledge, and walked sedately along the pasture, as if the coolness were

refreshing to his feet, after having so long and fast beaten the dusty road. That feeling was in itself both meat and drink; and as the flies were rather troublesome, he made for a nook overshadowed by a birk-tree, itself a bower—a weeping birch, as it is called—but it sheds no tears but tears of dew or rain-drop; and not in sadness but in joy—the joyful sense of its own beauty—lets fall its rich tresses, dishevelled you would say, were it not that they all hang orderly in the calm, and orderly wave in the wind—calm and wind alike delighting in their delicate grace and pensile elegance. The river was within a few yards of our stance—flowing, but scarcely seen to flow—so gently did the stoneless banks dip down to enclose the water in a circular pool, to which there appeared neither inlet nor outlet—a perfect picture of peace. It was enough to know that we were in the Vale of Ambleside; but our eyes saw nothing but the Naiad's Palace. It grew too beautiful to be gazed on, and we looked up through the light foliage, that showed the fleckered sky. There on a cleft bough was a missel-thrush sitting on her nest, with her eyes fixed on ours—and we knew, from their fond and fearless expression, that her breast was on her callow young. "May no callant, cat, or owl, harry the happy and hopeful household!" And she seemed to smile in our face as if she knew the meaning of our words, and that we could keep a secret. But at that moment we heard a doleful lamenting among the sylvan rocks behind us—of two poor shilfas that had been robbed of their all. What passions are in the woods!

Colonsay has fallen fast asleep. No doubt he is dreaming—for 'tis a false dictum that sound sleep is dreamless—and not till the senses are all shut up is the spirit wide-awake. He is now on his native isle. Friends he left dapple-grey come up to him milk-white. But why pursue such melancholy fancies? He recognises the green hills on which his unenclosed youth pastured—the moss-hags he used to overleap in his play—he snuffs with joy the unforgotten scent of the kelp on the shore that he was wont sportively to scatter as he raced with his compeers on the yellow sands—he dips his nose in the sea, and rejoicing to find it salt, feels as if foaled again. His mouth has never felt the bit, nor his back the saddle—and away he flies with flowing mane and tail, free as the osprey dashing into the deep. And now he sees the

majestic figure of the Laird himself—and at his side Fingal, the deer-hound. His neighings startle the Nereids in their coral caves, and Neptune, rearing his hoary head above the green-rolling billows, exults in the beauty of the breed of Colonsay—a high-descended strain—and half-designs to lure the rampant lion into the ebbing tide, that, yoked to Amphitrite's car, he may draw the Ocean Queen in van of that Annual Procession to the Isles of the Blest, where the setting sun smiles on the souls of the now peaceful Heroes!

Such might have been Colonsay's dream—if it were not, it was ours; yet why should we have wandered so far from the Naiads' Palace! Who gave it that name? Ourselves, in some visionary mood. But now those fancies forsook us—beautiful as they were—for, gazing into the mirror, we beheld such an Image! What but the image of ourselves and Colonsay standing upside down—in the air! For the water had disappeared,—yet undisturbed as our reality beneath the living tree that had ceased to whisper. Though not unknown to us the science of optics, we were not prepared to see ourselves partaking of the general inversion of inanimate nature! A slight surprise always accompanies for a moment such reflections; yet how perfectly reconciled do we become to the position of such shadowy worlds! There can be little doubt that in a few days we should love and admire the real world, just the same as we do now, were all the human race to walk along the earth on their heads, with their feet up to heaven!

While thus delighting ourselves with contemplation of our downward double, we became aware that it was a pool we were looking into, by a trout like a fish balancing himself half-way between soil and surface, with his head up the current, and ever and anon wavering up till his back-fin was in air—manifestly on the feed. He saw neither us nor our shadow—intent on midges. "Thy days are numbered," we inly said—and now we felt why ancient philosophers called Prudence the Queen of Virtues. Not one man in a million, in equipping himself for such a match, as was now on our part in quiet course of performance, would have included in his personal paraphernalia line and angle, and all manner of artificial flies. The beautiful birch-tree was rather in our way—yet that not much—and we were fearful of alarming the missel. But that fear was needless, for, knowing our

inoffensive character, she and her mate—we heard now by the fluttering and chirping—had been flying to and fro, feeding their gaping young, all the time of our dream. So we jointed our Walton, and annexed our gossamer, and throwing low, with no motion but of our wrist, dropt a single blue midge on the now visible eddy, and let it circle away down within easy reach of the simple and unsuspecting giant. What profundity of ignorance is implied in the doctrine, that the monarch of the flood lives on large flies! They cannot be too minute for the royal maw, provided he but knows that they are insects. A minnow, again, in his impertinence and presumption, will open his mouth, of which, large as it is proportionally to his other members, he has miserably mistaken the dimensions—to swallow a dragon-fly as big as a bird. But soft! he has it. A jerk so slight that we must not call it a jerk—and we have hooked him inextricably by the tongue in among the teeth. No fear of our gut. Whew! there he goes—and the merry music of the reel reminds us of the goat-sucker's song, as, with mouth wide open, he sits at evening on a paling, sucking in the moths.

Had you your choice, would you rather angle from a too wakeful Cob, or from a Cob, like Colonsay, comatose? Perhaps this question may remind you of another almost as nice —which we have heard mooted—"Whether would you have your eyes torn out by pincers, or punched in by rule?" Our answer, after mature deliberation, was, "That we should like to have one eye torn out by pincers, and the other punched in by rule." We have angled, not without loss of temper, from very restless animals; yet 'tis perhaps more trying to hook a first-class trout from a quadruped plunged in profoundest sleep. A third case is, that of your sleep-walker—but we shall not now discuss it, as its introduction would render the question too complicate. As long as the hookee kept in the present pool, 'twas well that Colonsay heard no "voice cry to all the house—Sleep no more—Colons doth murder sleep." We found our advantage in his unupbraiding conscience. But as soon as his majesty set off to seek refuge in his distant dominions, we wished that Somnus had lashed Colonsay with a whip of scorpions. The fugitive king had it then all his own way, like a bull in a china-shop. Conservatives as we have ever been, we felt that the power of the Crown had increased,

was increasing, and ought to be diminished; but where lay the board of control? Had he reposed due confidence in the loyalty of the silent people of the provinces, and trusted to the strongholds remote from the capital, he might have been at this day on the throne. But his heart misgave him—and he came back of his own accord to his own and the Naiads' Palace. Even then he might have saved his life by taking the sulks. But he was, though of a fearful, of a fiery nature; he knew not when to make resistance and when to yield; and the consequence was, that in twenty minutes from the time his tongue first felt the barb, he turned up his yellow side, and floated shorewards, "fat, and scant of breath." Even then a wallop might have been his salvation; but he had not spirit to make one;—and Bobby Partridge—who had been in vain trying the worm—fortunately making his appearance just at that moment with his well-known dodging step along the banks—he dipped in his landing-net, and brought the Brobdignag into another element, all shining with stars and crosses and orders, like some great naval commander. His weight is uncertain—for he never was in any scales but his own; but when pressed well down into our creel, his snout and tail were visible—and we had to fasten the lid, not with peg, but twine. Yet was he not a grey trout, as our few descriptive touches have already shown—but a true son of Winander—of the line of the mottled monarchs who have therein disputed sovereignty with the long-jawed race of Jacks for many thousand years.

Just then Colonsay must have been experiencing in his sleep one of those not unsublime sensations that sometimes suddenly assail the slumberer, falling over the edge of a precipice, or off a weathercock on a spire. For springing several feet into the air, faster than any thought of ours he gave the side-spang, and had almost realised his dream. Another hand-breadth, and he had toppled into the Naiads' Palace. Hurra! Sammy Sitwell—standing on the stirrups—and working like Tommy Lye—comes flashing round the edge of the wood, on his return from High Skelwith; Colonsay, having shaken off his somnolency, joins issue; and once more the Match! the Match!

We met on the bridge—and nothing could be fairer than the junction-start. But, alas! on beginning to make play, we

made a discovery which, under any circumstances, and on any horse, would have been unfortunate—in our present predicament, likely to prove fatal. Colonsay had a knack—a sleight of tongue—by which he could slip, *ad libitum*, almost any bit out of his mouth; and as we had forgotten to tighten the buckles, there hung the snaffle outside his jaws; and with a bridle so adjusted, what could Castor himself have done? No more than Julius Cæsar, who used, in his hot youth, to go, like the old one, without saddle, with his face to the horse's tail, and his hands tied behind his back. However, we said nothing, and hasted to the crowd which we knew must be collected in Ambleside—whither we were now going like a couple of comets. How we rattled along Rottenrow! Benson's smithy right opposite—and a crowd of carts! Sam grew white on the jowl as a sheet. "Hold hard! pull up—or we shall be smashed"—we cried in no feigned alarm; he did so with a skill we could not but admire—and Colonsay, taking all things into consideration, judged it advisable to follow the example of the Shuffler—and thus no lives were sacrificed—nor was the old woman dangerously hurt, though her stall lost a leg, and there was a stramash among the gingerbread kings.

The poor Shuffler mare, though pretty fresh, was now discovered to be, nevertheless, in rather doleful dumps. Of her four shoes she had lost two, somewhere or other, up among the mountains, and the remaining pair were held by a very precarious tenure. Mr Benson had a hind-leg on his hip in a jiffey—and then a fore-leg; the pincers did their duty; and now all-fours were as free from iron as the day she first saw the light. But here again our magnanimity shone out in all its native lustre. We scorned to take advantage of a series of losses that might have befallen ourselves, and resolved to stay by Sitwell, who, as far as we had had an opportunity to observe, had hitherto conducted himself during the match with considerable candour, and never broken into a gallop on the direct line of operation. We had no right to object to each other's by-play. We declare on our honour and conscience—and after the lapse of twenty years, more or less, our country will not be incredulous—that neither by voice nor look did we give Mr Benson any hint how to reshoe the Shuffler. True, we had long been good friends—wags calling him

Vulcan and us Apollo—but with his style of shoeing we never interfered, though on this occasion the issue proved it to be worthy, not of our admiration only, but of our gratitude.

And who should make their appearance at the smithy-door, during the refit, but our dear friend, Green, the artist of the clouds, in company with Hills, the celebrated cattleist, and Havel, then at the head of the water-colourists—all three great geniuses—and as pleasant men, each in his own way, as ever leaned elbow on the social board. They had been out all morning with their portfolios—but now was the time for them to make themselves immortal—for what a subject for a grand historical Composition! No need for any sounding name—call it simply the Smithy-Door. We beseeched the main group, of which we were indeed ourselves the centre, and all the subordinate and accessory breakings-off but belongings-to it, to remain just as they were at that moment—for the picture stood there already composed by the Spirit of the Scene. All the three fortunate youths had to do was to transfer it to paper. Nay—look at it almost from what point you willed, still 'twas a picture! In perfect power operated there the principle of the pyramid! Green eyed the scene askance, and planted his tripod near the door of Mr Brown-rigg, the shoemaker, so that to the right he might get in his favourite pines—among the loftiest in England—and to the left, as many of those old overhanging roofs and galleried gables as the power of perspective might steal from the ancient Ambleside, yet leave her rich as ever in all most beautiful to artist's or poet's eyes. He had to take Us in front, but we could well bear foreshortening; and it has been generally thought that our face is finest in full view without shadow, and so would have felt even Rembrandt. Some children had gathered in a group—oh! how graceful still art thou, pure simple nature!—and encouraged by the benign physiognomy of Colonsay, one of them was holding up to him a bunch of wild-flowers, which he kept mumbling with his long lip, just to show his sense of the fair creature's kindness—and how all their rosy faces smiled as he scented the moss rose-buds, the earliest of the perfect year! Hills, again, studied the scene from the Cock—a pleasant Inn—itself a jewel. Taken from that point too, we were still the central figure—but we exhi-

bited a back-front—nor had we any reason to be ashamed of our shoulders, nor Colonsay of his rear—harmonious in their apt proportions. Shuffler and Sam, in their airy slimness, contrasted well with our strength columnar; and imagination peopled the void between the visible extremes of horse with many an intermediate kind of that most useful and ornamental of all animals. A few human figures, and a couple of curs, were hastily sketched in—and 'twas wonderful what an effect was produced by the skilful introduction of a cuddy, pacing leisurely by with his panniers, nor, in the midst of all the animation, so much as once lifting his eyes from the ground. But where sat Havel? Removed some way down in front, just opposite pretty Miss Preston's millinery-shop, whence the scene assumed the shape of a circle, and fancy had room to play with feeling, and imagination to expatiate among all possibilities of the picturesque, without losing sight of the main incidents and characters that gave an historical interest to the whole. Never was Havel more happy! There they hang—all the three sketches—and though cheerful the scene in itself, and mirth and merriment on every countenance, it grows indistinct before our old eyes—not that they are always dim, but hope is not now so ready with her sunshine as memory with her tears.

But the scene was sketched, and the Shuffler shoed—and the street, far as the eye could reach, cleared for the start. That was not very far—for the houses, as if desirous to see the fun, had stolen insensibly forwards, and the willow before poor Green's door overhung the road more than usual, as it closed the vista. What carts might lie beyond we knew and cared not, only we hoped they might not be loaded with timber. Yet hope, we felt, was strangely like fear—but "off—off" was the cry—and the crowd could not contain their admiration at the style in which we rose in our stirrups! "North for ever!" "Sammy for a shilling!" "Done, done, done!" But the show of hands was in our favour ten to one; and had the times been at all political in those parts—which, thank heaven, they were not—we should have been carried for the county.

Three wood-waggons loaded sky-high from Rydal Forest with oak! Coming down hill so as to occupy the whole area of the market-place—and we meeting them at a trot fast as

any gallop! Far advanced beyond them all was King Log threatening the firmament. Colonsay "stooped his anointed head as low as death," to avoid destruction—and with a single *coup d'œil*, seeing the impossibility of breaking even the weakest part of the line, with miraculous command over motion, converted the forward into the backward, and as if his tail had been his head, set off smithy-wards, oversetting much of the crowd; nor was it possible for us to restrain his impetuosity—for the harder we pulled, the greater acceleration he acquired—till he broke into such a gallop as will never be forgotten, by those who had the good fortune to behold it, till their dying day!

And were Sam and the Shuffler smashed to death by the live timber—for alive it was, or it never could have swung itself about in that way—or crushed beneath the wooden wheels of waggons, each worse than the car of Juggernaut? Not they. The mare had hunted with Meynel, and was a treasure at timber. The northernmost waggon near the Old Cross drooped its tail to within five feet of the ground, and Sam, who was as skilful as fearless, shoved her at it, at the critical moment just ere it rose again, cleared it like winking, and disappeared!

In no long time Colonsay perceived that he was not going in his usual way, and returned to the charge. Now the waggons had been drawn up, so as to leave a lane for our transit, and we again made play. Our dangers, it was not unreasonable to hope, might be mostly over; but we could not conceal from ourselves that we had many difficulties still to encounter—and one we saw even now was at hand. For some years we had made it a practice, more honoured in the observance than the breach, never to pass the Salutation Inn, without shaking hands, and taking a horn of ale with the worthy landlord, our friend Wilcock; and there he stood on the steps! With great presence of mind he ordered a band of haymakers to form a line, two deep, on the brow of the hill, the front rank kneeling, with rakes, like muskets with fixed bayonets, to receive and repel the expected charge. But Mrs Rennyson's heart gave way—and Colonsay, availing himself of a weak point, broke through, and made good his customary position below the sign. Nan was ready with the ale—three horns—one for Mr North, one for her master, and one, larger

than the largest size, for Colonsay, who took his malt as kindly as the best Christian that ever turned up a little finger. Business being despatched, he gave his head a shake, as much as to say, "Good-by," and set off neighing in pursuit of the Shuffler.

We had now found out the pace that best suited such a contest—a steady long swinging trot—six feet or thereabouts at a stride—and we were only afraid we should too soon overtake Sam. That fear, however, we had reason to dismiss the moment it arose; for lo! on the crown of the hill—where the road turns off perpendicularly to Kirkstone—a jaunting-car, two gigs, a shandrydan, horsemen and horsewomen, all gaily bedecked with white ribbons and stars on their breasts—a marriage party—Tom Earle of Easdale and Rose Allardyce of Goldrill-green—accompanied with their cortège—about to be made one by Parson Crakelt in Ambleside Church!

Will the world believe us when we say that we had utterly forgotten our engagement formed a week before—to officiate as Groom's Man? But *Fortuna favet fortibus*—and there we were providentially at the very nick of time. To be sure, our dress was not just quite the thing—being better adapted for one match than the other; but Mr Earle would not hear of our proposal to exchange it, temporarily, for the apparel of one of his friends, who had to fill a subordinate situation—so just as we were, except that we doused the pink cap, we accompanied the joyous assemblage to the Church.

A nobler-looking pair never stood before the altar. Tom had thrown all the best men in the ring—and was certainly the most elegant wrestler ever seen in the North of England. Yet like all perfectly proportioned men, he showed no signs of extraordinary strength, nay, seemed almost slender, though on Mount Ida he could have contended with Paris. A milder countenance or a sunnier you could not see on a summer's day; and intellect of no common kind was enthroned on that lofty forehead, radiant through clouds of curls dark as the raven's wing. And if Tom Earle "gave the world assurance of a MAN, so did Rose Allardyce of a *woman*. None of your tiny thread-paper, artificial fairy-creatures, whom you may dance on your thumb, and care not though they were to evanish over your shoulder like shadows among the lady-fern; but a substantial flesh-and-blood, bright and breathing, beau-

tiful human being—fit for the wear and tear of life—and come what may of weal and woe, grateful to enjoy and content to suffer—one of the

"Sound healthy children of the God of heaven"—

who, in the dark hour, with a single smile, can bring the rainbow over a cloud of tears.

It was with such thoughts and feelings as these pleasantly passing through our heart, not without a shade of awe, that we saw an old grey-headed man—not her father, for she was an orphan—give away the bride. Nothing can be better than the marriage ceremony — nor indeed every other part of the ritual of the Church of England—a service which you may seek to improve after you have brightened up a bit and reduced to order the stars. And now that it was over, Rose seemed even a sweeter flower. Her blushes had left her cheeks somewhat paler than their wont—but the colour returned at the bridegroom's kiss; and that kiss was a signal for us not to be idle, so we put Tom gently aside, and, "preein' her bonny mou'," we went smacking our way round the circle—an example which was no sooner set than followed by the rest of the congregation, while the winged cherubs on the walls laughed as if they had been so many Cupids, and a Saint, who looked for usual rather grim, grew gay as a Hymen.

The improvements, as they are called, of modern science, have, even in mountainous countries, reduced, alas! most of the roads, once so precipitous, to nearly a dead level! It was not so in Westmoreland in the age of the Match. Bear witness from the stony world of the past, Thou Descent out of Ambleside! And where now can you find a truly sharp turn? All smoothed meanly off, without "mark or likelihood," against which it is next to impossible to capsize! True, that people get killed yet—but "then 'tis the rate that does it;" and bridges are so built now that not one coach in a million leaps the ledge—in the times we write of, an almost daily occurrence. But 'tis in vain to complain. Down that Descent out of Ambleside, now drove like blazes the nuptial cavalcade. None of the party were great whips—but they all knew well how to manage the reins. They flung them loose on their coursers' backs—simply taking care not to let them get entangled with tails. The young couple led the way in the

car, then a novelty—the gigs were in the centre—and the shandrydan rattled in the rear. A squadron of cavalry cleared the road before the carriages, and, with our usual prudence, we followed the wheels. Not that we saw them, for seldom have we been enveloped in a denser cloud of dust. But we heard them, and so should we had we been all but stone-deaf. Think not that we consulted our own safety in not joining the vanguard. For though we were a single man, Colonsay now carried double—the bridesmaid was behind us, with her soft arm round our waist—and for her sake we blessed our stars that we had that day mounted a crupper. We knew it was mid-day, but in the heart of the whirlwind 'twas nearly night. We could have believed, oh! fond dream of an enamoured fancy! that we were a young Arab, carrying away on the desert-born his sole child from a chieftain's tent!

The noise died away like thunder behind a hill—the atmosphere became clearer, and we were aware of entering a wood. Colonsay affected sylvan scenery, "and, path or no path, what cared he?" was bearing his now precious burden into the forest-gloom. Sweet Hannah became alarmed, but "we calmed her fears, and she was calm," for no evil thought was in our heart —"no maiden lays her scathe to us;" and say, ye Dryads who dwell in the blessed woods of Westmoreland, and have seen us a thousand times roaming not unaccompanied through all their glades, if you know not well that in our eyes—worshippers as we were of all beauty—the holiest thing under heaven was confiding Innocence!

Colonsay stood still as a lamb in the centre of a circle of greensward, that had many years ago been the site of a charcoal burning; and it almost always happens that out of the works of industry busying itself in the woods, arises a new character of beauty, retaining, without any loss to the charm of nature, an almost imperceptible touch—a faint vestige of art. So was it here. A Poet—(but are we a poet?)—could not have created so still a spot out of the soft leaves of sleep. The foliage looked as if it had never known but the vernal breath of Dream-land. Yet what were they but simple hazels—the commonest wood that grows—and nothing, we have heard it said, can be very beautiful that is not somewhat rare—a saying that the infant morning can refute, by shaking from the foxglove millions of lovelier pearls than ever were

brought up by diver from Indian seas. But though the coppice was of hazel, high over-head, and far around, an oak—too old to let us think of its age—diffused almost a twilight. Yet not so solemn as to hush the glad linnets' lays—and wide they warbled, while each brooding bird listened but to its own mate, and heard but the hymn meant for its own nest. And now all are mute—as if hushed by a profounder hymeneal song; for from some uncertain far-off place the cushat coos—and silence is listening along with us to the passionate music so full all the while of affection—Ah! heard'st thou ever, Hannah! a sound so sweet with love, and so strong with faith—is there not a spell in the word conjugal—and thinkest thou not, my child, that more delightful than to be bridesmaid—though this is the happiest holiday in thy life—would it be, in a few months or so, to be thyself the Bride?

But we must make no revelation of the tender colloquy that there ensued—let it suffice to say, that we promised to be present at the marriage, which we found was to be in September. "See, sir—the bonny Con!" And there sat a pert squirrel on a mossy bough, who had overheard every word we said, and was now mocking us with antic grimaces, while his brush curled gracefully over his head, and his bright burnished fur showed that he was the bead of the woods. Colonsay, who had merely retired from the dust, knowing it must be now laid, resought the road—and hark! the sound of a trumpet!

A couple of Cantabs trotting along in a Tandem! That soph handles the reins like a man destined to be senior wrangler—and in him who blows the bugle we hear a gold medallist. Fine fellows are they both as ever worked team or problem. From the wood we take our station close before the leader, and lo! now a Random! Colonsay has quite a classical character—and unencumbered with traces, he looks like one of those noble prancers on antique gem or *basso relievo*. The wheeler has nothing to do in the shafts but to keep moving—the ci-devant leader is now proud to be a follower—and the whip enjoys his sinecure. Much gentlemanly nonsense are the scholars talking to Hannah, and we fear, from the titter that slightly thrills her frame, that they may be slyly quizzing the elderly gentleman; but youth will be youth—and we know that, in the midst of all that winking of eyes and screwing of

mouths, they have a respect amounting to veneration for Christopher North.

Ivy Cottage seems on its way to Ambleside, as we give it the go-by—Rydal Water glimmers away towards Windermere —and we are at the Nab. Lo! below the shadow of the sycamores the marriage party—who had just then discovered that we were missing, and loud congratulations hail our advent. The Random is reduced to a Tandem—for Colonsay gives the side-spang, and the Newtonians keep the noisy tenor of their way towards Grasmere—while Nab-Scaur proves he can blow the bugle too, and plays the Honey-Moon on the same key—but what breath from human lips so wildly sweet as the echoes!

Hannah slips off like a sun-loosened snow-wreath, and is in the arms of a girl, lovelier even than herself, who had been keeping house during the wedding, and arranging the parlour for a *déjeûné* at once rich and simple, while she had tastefully garlanded the lintel and porch with flowers. Through the jessamine-lattice window we looked in on the preparations, but had strength of mind not to dismount; and as soon as the bridegroom learnt that we were engaged in a match, he released us from our remaining duties as his man, considering that we had sufficiently shown our zeal in his service by the part we performed in church. We then drank "Joy" in a glass of delicious elder-flower wine, fairer and more fragrant than Frontignac—and pausing for a moment to take in the whole beautiful happiness of the scene into our heart—lake, trees, hills, houses, humanities, heavens, and all—"swift as an arrow from a Tartar's bow," we shot away towards White Moss.

Where, thought we, may be Sam? Symptoms saw we none of the Shuffler—for feet of all kinds had for hours been disturbing the dust—nor among all that trampling could a Red-man's eye have noted the print of her hoof. But as we had not met him, we could not doubt that he was only ahead—and the chief difficulties to be encountered, it was cheering to learn, awaited us both equally on our return. We scorn to ask questions—nor could they indeed have been of any avail; for though we had overtaken many persons, we had met none—the stream of life all flowing in one direction—towards Gras-

mere fair. It was known there that we were coming, for Rumour trots faster even than Colonsay—nay, used to out-gallop Childers and Eclipse.

And now we were on White Moss, and keeping a firm seat, in case of a blast in the slate-quarries, when a sight met our eyes at that rate altogether unintelligible, incomprehensible, and unaccountable, but alarming in the most mysterious degree to man and horse—even beyond a ghost. It seemed something hairy, and of a size so enormous, that its stature, like Satan's, reached the sky. Could it be Satan? No—the Prince of the Air flies by night—this monster was moving on the earth in the face of day. Colonsay saw it the instant we did, and was rooted. Desperation fixed our eyes on the shape—"if shape it might be called, which shape had none"—and, thank heaven! it gradually dwindled into a huge bear—standing upright on legs thicker than our body—handling a pole across his breast like a pine; and, oh! spirit of Vestris—*dancing!* Yes! dancing to a tambourine and a hurdy-gurdy—waltzing a solo—pirouetting—and soon as he saw us, describing the figure of a foursome and fearsome Scotch reel, jig-time—and then, as if setting to his partner, perpetrating the Highland fling! Never did Napoleon utter a more original truth than when he said, that there is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous—Colonsay must have felt that as keenly as we did—laughter convulsed our diaphragms—and so strange were the peals, that we thought the old mountains would have fallen into hysterics.

Fancy "holds each strange tale devoutly true," told of *fascinations*. "A serpent's eye shines dull and shy," saith Coleridge, in "that singularly beautiful and original poem" *Christabelle*—and like a true poet he describes its effect on that hapless ladye. Aristotle saw into the life of things when he declared poetry to be more philosophical than history—but he has nowhere said that fiction is more true than fact. Here, however, we have to record a fact more extraordinary than any fiction—and leave you to draw the moral. All imitation is from sympathy—and in illustration of that apothegm we could write a book. But here was a fact more illustrative of its truth than many volumes of the profoundest metaphysical disquisition. Colonsay, who had been not only riveted, but, as we said, rooted to the spot by sight of the bear, began to

regard him with a horrid sympathy—his inner being began to bruin—his neigh became a growl—and rising on his hind-legs, with his fore-legs mimicking paws, true to time and measure, as his grotesque prototype before him, he began walking the *minuet de la cour*, and soon as tambourine and hurdy-gurdy changed to a livelier tune, slid away into saraband!

You cannot be so unreasonable as to expect that we should be able to describe our feelings in such a predicament—composed as the mixture was of so many ingredients hitherto supposed to be unamalgamatable—of which a few were the internal senses of fear, fun, folly, horror, awe, melancholy, mirth, self-pity, shame, pride, wonder, novelty, absurdity, and sublimity—but so meagre a list of simple emotions can give you no idea of the one composite. The spectators seemed numerous—and you may faintly conceive what a dash of bitterness was thrown into our cup, already full to the brim with sufferings, by the appearance, on the edge of the crowd, of the immortal author of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and him since so celebrated as the English Opium-Eater. Their looks showed that they were under the delusion that this was a voluntary as well as gratuitous exhibition; whereas they were bound as poets, philosophers, and Christians, to have known that we were under the power of the Bear—Ursa Major being now manifestly the constellation that had ruled at our birth—and who can control his fate?

But was ever sight more beautiful than what now rose before us high up in the firmament! A graceful girl in a foreign garb, trousered, and turbaned, and stilted, walked dancingly in the air, showering smiles, and warbling melody, the loveliest Savoyard that ever crossed seas far away from her own hut on the vine-clad hill. And as she smiled and sang, she came circling towards us, with that aerial motion of which every new gliding figure was like finer and wilder poetry, till, like a creature angelical, she hung in the sunshine above our head, and dropped round the neck of her thrall a chaplet of flowers, wreathed by fingers familiar with all the magic of the southern clime! The Bear ceased his gambols—and Colonsay again grew horse. We gave the bright witch gold, and were just about to bow to our illustrious friends—when a mannikin, in a red jacket, jumped up behind us, and away went Colonsay like a whirlwind. It was a monkey—

and Jacko, not anticipating the effect of his trick, clung to our back with his arms round our neck—and his blear-eyed face adhesive to our cheek—oh! how unlike that face which half-an-hour ago we bent back ours to meet—and from its balmy mouth received a kiss in the dim wood!

What is this? what is this? We are swimming in a lake. Grasmere Lake—we know it by its Island. Curse the incubus—we shall be throttled. Could we but get our knife unclasped, we would cut off the little miscreant's paws. Courage, Colonsay—courage—swim steady, we beseech you—have pity on your poor master. Suchlike continued to be our ejaculations along the edge of the line of water-lilies, which, even in his affright, Colonsay instinctively kept clear of—and we rejoiced to perceive that he was making for the Island. Boats put out from all the bays—and the first that neared us was Robert Newton's, who had been fishing perch, and slipped anchor the moment he heard the plunge. But we warned him to keep off, lest Colonsay should sink him; and now began a race of a novel kind—Colonsay against a pair of oars—for a gallon of ale and a leash of mutton pies—who should first touch the beach. The craft was rather heading us, when crash went the wooden pin on which the Grasmereans then used to fix their oars, and Bobby fell back off the shaft with his heels in the air, while, a light breeze having sprung up, he drifted considerably to leeward. We could now count the corner-stones of the Barn; Colonsay snorted as he smelt the pasture; and getting footing now on a shoal of fine gravel, more like a hippopotamus than a mere land-horse, he galloped through a brood of ducklings, and established himself on *terra firma* beyond the water-line, and in among the daffodillies, that crowded round to kiss the victor's feet. Just then he gave himself such a shake—like a Newfoundlander—that Jacko, who had heedlessly relaxed his hold, was dislodged to a great distance—and by-and-by sitting down disconsolately on a stone, looked

"Like shipwreck'd mariner on desert coast."

But we had no compassion for the pest, and let him sit shivering unheeded there in his wet regimentals, while we intensely enjoyed that vital refreshment consequent on the plunge-bath. Colonsay had leaped into the Lake, as we were afterwards credibly informed, from a pretty high rock; and

we were assured by the same authority, that he had never witnessed any sight more imposing than our Dive. Grasmere Lake is full of springs, so in spots not only cool, but cold even in the dog-days; and we, who had entered its sweet waters, a child of dust, left them an etherealised creature of the element. 'Twas now post meridian quarter less one, and since six of the morning what had we not gone through? Seven hours in the saddle—with nothing to eat but breakfast and lunch, a few horns of ale, a suck of Glenlivet, and a tumbler of elder-flower wine. The strongest constitution cannot be wholly proof against such privations, and we had felt, we confess, a certain sinking of the heart—near the region of the stomach—which had somewhat affected our spirits. But not more sovereign remedy is "spermaceti for an inward bruise," than that spring-fed lake for lassitude and weariness even to the verge of death. We could have imagined ourselves a Minor on the eve of his majority, glorying in the thought of the Gaudeamus nature was preparing for the morrow, when the sun was to see him of age. Scores of crazy years, with all their infirmities, had been drowned, or shaken off; Crutch himself felt efflorescence, and as we held him up, we fancied he began to bud. Yes! we believe it now—so exults the Eagle—when, moulting centuries that fall away from him like feathers, he renews his youth.

We stood on the green navel of the lake. So clear the air, and so keen our eyes, that without losing anything of their grandeur, the encircling mountains showed all their beautiful individualities; distinctly was visible the tall lady-fern, as if within hand-reach; we saw, or thought we saw, the very glossiness on the silver stems of the scattered birch-trees—there was no mistaking one of all the many varieties of foliage; apparent along the brighter verdure were the innumerous sheep-paths; it might be imagination, but we believed our eye rested in its wanderings on the Fairy rings. The Beautiful closed in upon us, and our heart leapt up to meet it, our arms opened to fold it in our embrace. We were in love with Nature, and she with us, and in our intercommunion we became one living soul.

You may call this extravagant—and it may be so; but extravagant you can never call the sweet delight that breathed on us from all the still island itself—with its serene scenery

—but a barn and outhouse, and a few firs—no more; and as for living creatures—on the low lying pasture, undulating into uplands, some score of silly sheep. Of how few and simple materials may consist a pastoral picture, that shall deeply stir the heart.

Never, in all our born days, heard we such a neighing and whinnying of horses, mares, and foals! In Tail-End—an estate on the shores of the Mainland—resides a speculative breeder—and yonder field sloping down to the lake is full of all manner of manes and tales, not unobserved of Colonsay, who has been startled by the outbreak of the music of his mother-tongue, and lends his lungs to the concert. But that cannot content him, and we must make up our minds for another swim. However, this time he takes matters more quietly, and walks slowly into the water, belly deep, sipping some of it, and cooling his nose with now and then a dip, till the bottom slides away from his hoofs, and he assumes the otter.

The flotilla, in the form of a crescent "sharpening its mooned horns," attends us to the landing-place—and having thus at two innings fairly crossed the lake, we are once more on the continent. But here new dangers surround us in the shape of all sorts of quadrupeds—and a vicious horse, well known by the name of the Baldfaced Stag, runs at us with his teeth. Rising in the stirrups, like King Robert Bruce on the approach of Sir Henry de Bohun, we deliver on his skull such a whack of the Crutch, that he staggers and sinks on his knees —while Colonsay, turning tail, flings out savagely, and puts him *hors de combat*. Seeing their leader fall, the whole squadron of cavalry take to ignominious flight, and we soon find ourselves on the plateau in front of the house. And who should we find there but two who had "been absent long, and distant far"—SAMMY AND THE SHUFFLER!!

What a change had time, toil, and trouble wrought on the once gallant pair! Sam, had it been night-time, might have passed for his own ghost. So reduced, he was a mere featherweight. "Poor putty-face!" we involuntarily ejaculated—"sallower than thine own doeskins!" Seeing us, he smiled as if he were weeping—but not a word did he speak, and we began to suspect that he had received a *coup de soleil*. The hospitable and humane resident—our much esteemed friend,

Mr Younghusband—whom we had not at first observed—we now saw standing at a small distance, surveying Sam and the Shuffler with a countenance in which there was no hope. After mutual congratulations had been exchanged between us, he informed us that he had presented Sitwell with various refreshments, but that the infatuated man would neither eat nor drink, and persisted in being speechless—that he had offered to send for medical and clerical assistance (we thought he whispered the word undertaker), but that the offer had been met by that mournful but decided negative, a mute shake of the head. Deaf, therefore, Sam was not—but he was dumb—regularly done up—completely finished. Nor in less piteous plight was the Shuffler. She still, indeed, had a leg to stand on, but of all the four not one that could have obeyed her will, had she attempted to walk. She had hobbled to that extreme point, beyond which exhausted nature could not go an inch. She was alive, and that was all that could be safely asserted either of her or Sam. That shoeing had finally done its business—the iron cramps had proved too much for her corns and bunions; though fired on all fours, no sinews could stand for so many hours the unrelieved pressure: moreover, she had foundered—and except in the tail, which shook violently, the patient now appeared in general paralysis. Sitwell was not cruel—but he had committed a sad error in going round by the Close, and taking the left bank of the Lake. Besides, he had been carried away, as he afterwards told us, by a trail-hunt.

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and we prudently and generously offered to let him off for fifty. No human foresight could predict what might happen to ourselves on the way home. Sam revived at the proposal, and in presence of a good witness nodded assent. But nods are often deceptive and illusory altogether, so we insisted on the blunt.

> "Slowly his fobs the fumbling hand obey,
> And give the struggling shiners to the day."

But shall we miss the festivities of Grasmere Fair? Forbid it, heaven. Mr Younghusband, with Herculean arms, lifts Mr Sitwell off the saddle, and places him behind Mr North, promising himself to follow. The sun is shedding intolerable day, and we unfurl our umbrella. Sam, whose strength is

fast returning, carries the parasol—we flourish the Crutch. Colonsay, after a few funks, gets under weigh, and in three minutes is in the heart of the Fair. What a crowd round the Victor! Nobody looks at the bear. But there is the Witch of Savoy in the air, waving her turban, heedless of her leman angrily lamenting for Jacko. On all sides we see "the old familiar faces." Conspicuous above all, that honoured Statesman, John Green—who assists us to dismount—and, leaning on his arm, we walk into the mouth of the Red Lion. Then, facing about, we bow to the Fair, who ratifies our victory "with nine times nine;" and at that moment we wished to die, "lest aught less great should stamp us mortal."

COLERIDGE'S POETICAL WORKS.

[OCTOBER 1834.]

Poets win to themselves by their works a personal regard and affection from all who have derived delight from their genius. All their readers may be said to be their friends; and admiration is almost always mingled with love. Nor is it wonderful that it should be so. We converse with them in their purest and highest and holiest moods; we are familiar only with the impress of their character, stamped, without alloy of baser matter, on gold. We speak now, it is manifest, but of those poets—and thank heaven the greatest are among the number—who have been faithful to their calling on earth—have not profaned the god-given strength by making it subservient to unworthy or unhallowed ends—nor kindled any portion of the sacred fire on the altars of impurity or superstition. Genius and imagination do not save their possessors from sin. That fatal disease is in all human veins—and circulates with the blood from all human hearts. But genius and imagination can beautify even virtue—that is the noblest work they were intended to perform for man—and poetry has performed it far beyond any other power that spiritualises life. A great or good poet, in his hours of inspiration—and that word has been allowed by the wisest—is as free as mortal man may be—except when under the still holier influence of religion, its services, and its ministrations—from all that ordinarily pollutes, or degrades, or enslaves our moral being;—and we are willing, not without deep reason, to believe that the revelations he then makes before our eyes of the constitution of his soul are true—that by them he is to be judged on earth what manner of man he is;—so that should aught at other times appear perplexing in his character or conduct, and inconsistent with that ideal which his own genius, in its purest apparition,

induced and enabled us to form of him in our fancy, we are bound—unless all belief be baseless—in spite of much that may trouble us in what we cannot understand or reconcile—to hold fast our faith in the virtue of the superior powers of his being—nor fear that the glory is but "false glitter," because, like everything beneath the sun, it may for a while be clouded or eclipsed.

The personal character of our most illustrious poets has, with very few exceptions — and in those cases there are mournful mysteries never perhaps to be understood in this "unintelligible world"—been all that we who owe them an unappreciable debt of gratitude—best paid in brotherly love and Christian charity—could desire; and if some flaws and frailties have been shown by the light of genius, that would have been invisible or unnoticed in ordinary men, it is worse than weak, it is wicked, to point with pleasure to stains on the splendour. "Blessings be with them and eternal praise," is the high sentiment of enlightened humanity towards the memory of all such benefactors. There is no wisdom in weighing in scales misnamed of justice, and neither of gold nor diamond, the virtues against the vices of any one of our fellow-creatures. The religion of nature prompts no such balancing of praise and blame, even with the living—therefore surely not with the dead; nor does the religion of the New Testament. Yet unholy inquisition is too often made even into the secrets hidden in the heart of genius—and from wan cheek, or troubled eye, or distracted demeanour, or conduct outwardly "wanting grace," have unjust inferences been cruelly drawn, calculated to lower what was in truth highest, and to cloud what was in truth brightest in the nature of some glorious creature, who, if clearly known to the whole world, would have been held worthy of the whole world's love.

> "Call it not vain! they do not err,
> Who say that when a poet dies,
> Mute Nature mourns her worshipper,
> And celebrates his obsequies!"

Mute nature mourns not; but with the tears in our eyes for some great loss—she seems to weep with us—with sobs in our heart, every whisper in the woods sounds like a sigh. The day our Minstrel was buried, there was no melancholy

upon Dryburgh tower or woods. Yet thinking on his death, to us Scotland even now seems sad. Another great poet—and another—have since disappeared. Yet a little while, and lights no less resplendent will go out in dust. Scott, Crabbe, Coleridge—names for so many years pronounced with a proud, kind emphasis, as if it raised us in our own estimation to love and honour such compatriots—now but names, and with almost a mournful sound!

"Nor draw their frailties from their dread abode."

That line has lost not a breath of its holy power by perpetual repetition from millions of lips. Frailties, no doubt, had those Sons of the Morning, though framed in "all the pomp and prodigality of heaven"—even like the humblest of their brethren, whose lot it was in life to live like paupers in mind on the alms of niggard nature. The frailties of the low obscure are safe in the grave. Some love-planted flowers flourish awhile over their dust, and then fade away for ever, like their memories, that live but in a few simple and unrepining hearts. But the famous tombs of the Genii are sometimes visited by pilgrims that are not worshippers—and who come not there in entire reverence. All eyes are not devoutly dim that read the letters on such monuments—all hearts are not holily inspired when dreaming on such dust—and Envy, that knows not itself to be Envy, sometimes seeks in vain to believe that the genius, now sanctified by death, was not in life but another name for transcendent virtue.

No man was ever more beloved by his friends—and among them were many of the great as well as the good—than the poet Coleridge. We so call him; for he alone perhaps of all men that ever lived was always a poet—in all his moods—and they were many—*inspired*. His genius never seemed to burn low—to need fuel or fanning; but gently stirred, uprose the magic flame—and the flame was fire. His waking thoughts had all the vividness of visions, all the variousness of dreams—but the Will, whose wand in sleep is powerless, reigned over all those beautiful reveries, which were often like revelations; while Fancy and Imagination, still obedient to Reason, the lawgiver, arrayed earth and life in such many-coloured radiance that they grew all divine.

But others are better privileged than we are to speak of those wonderful displays, spontaneous as breathing, of those

wonderful endowments; and therefore we now refrain from giving further utterance to our admiration of the only eloquence we ever heard that deserved the name—and assuredly from no lack of love. A holier duty is incumbent on them who were nearest and dearest to him; ere long we know it will be worthily done; and then it will be confessed by all who have an ear to hear and a heart to feel

"The still sad music of humanity,"

that he who was so admirable a poet, was one of the most amiable of men. Who, now, can read unmoved, "his own humble and affectionate epitaph?"—well so called by one who was to him even as one of his own sons—written with calm heart but trembling hand—a month or two before his death!

"Stop, Christian passer-by! Stop, child of God,
And read with gentle heart. Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he;—
O lift in thought a prayer for S. T. C.
That he, who many a year, with toil of breath,
Found death in life, may here find life in death!
Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame,
He asked, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same."

Nor are we going now to compose a critical essay on the genius of Coleridge. For many years it has been understood by all who know what poetry is; and all that future ages can do for his fame, will be to extend it. His exquisite sensibilities of human affection will continue to charm, as they have charmed, all kindred spirits—who feel that the common chords of the heart, touched by a fine finger, can discourse most excellent music; but in coarser natures, though kind—"and peace be to them, for there are many such"—some even of his loveliest lays will awaken no answering emotion of delight—though

"Like unto an angel's song
That bids the heavens be mute!"

The imagery he raises before their eyes will be admired—for almost all eyes communicate with some inner sense of beauty; but the balmy breath in which it is enveloped, adding sweetness to the Spring, will escape unfelt—and so will the ethereal colouring that belongs not to the common day; for to be aware of the presence of that air and that light—so spiritual

—you must, "in a wise passiveness," be yourself a poet. Thus—

> "Oft, with patient ear,
> Long listening to the viewless skylark's note,
> (Viewless, or haply for a moment seen,
> Gleaming on sunny wings), in whisper'd tones,
> I've said to my beloved—'Such, sweet girl!
> The unobtrusive song of happiness,
> Unearthly minstrelsy! then only heard,
> When the soul seeks to hear; when all is hush'd,
> And the heart listens.'"

Even his Love Poems, though full of fondness and tenderness, to overflowing, nor yet unimpassioned, are not for the multitude; they are either so spiritualised as to be above their sympathies, or so purified as not to meet them; but to all those who are imaginative in all their happiness—to whom delight cannot be delusion—where in Poetry is there another such Lay of Love as *Genevieve?*

> "All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
> All are but ministers of Love,
> And feed his sacred flame!"

All Poets who have held close communion with what is called inanimate nature, have given her, not only life, but a mind, a heart, and a soul; and though Philosophers, for doing so, have been very generally called Atheists, few have accused of irreligion the mere poetical creed. Only think of calling Wordsworth an Atheist! He, far beyond one and all of all other men, has illustrated the Faith of Universal Feeling. In Coleridge there are many fine touches of the same attributive Fancy; but his conceptive power, though strong and bright, was not equal to that of his Master—"that mighty Orb of Song." It is a strange assertion to make at this time of day, "that no writer has ever expressed the great truth, that man makes his world, or that it is the imagination which shapes and colours all things, more vividly than Coleridge. Indeed, he is the poet who, in the age in which we live, brought forward that position into light and action." The writer had surely forgot Shakespeare; nor, had he remembered him, could he well have said this in the glorious face of Wordsworth. That Imagination

" bodies forth
The form of things unknown, turns them to shapes."

" and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name," is the finest of all possible expressions of the oldest of all possible truths—and no Poet ever sang who did not exemplify it. But we agree with the enlightened and amiable critic, that Coleridge has, throughout all his Poetry, delightfully exhibited such creative process of the Imaginative Faculty, and, in one rich and rare passage, expounded most philosophically, and illustrated most poetically, a great and universally-acknowledged Truth. Here it is :—

" A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—
O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That gave away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth

Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth,
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud,
Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower,
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light."

But there is one region in which Imagination has ever loved to walk—now in glimmer, and now in gloom—and now even in daylight—but it must be a nightlike day—where Coleridge surpasses all poets but Shakespeare—nor do we fear to say, where he equals Shakespeare. That region is the preternatural. Some of Scott's works strongly excite the feelings of superstitious fear and traditional awe; witness the Ballad of "Glenfinlas," and the Lady in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel.* So do the "Thorn," "Lucy Gray," "Hartleap Well," and the "Danish Boy," of Wordsworth—which overflow, too, with many other exquisite kinds of imaginative feeling, besides the superstitious. But in prodigious power and irresistible, the Ancient Mariner bears off the bell from them all, which he tolls till the sky grows too dismal to be endured; and what witch, at once so foul and so fair, so felt to be fatal in her fearful beauty, an apparition of bliss and of bale—as the

stately Lady Geraldine? What angel—in her dread so delicate—in her distress so graceful—as she—the Dove of her own Dream—fascinated to death by that hissing serpent—like the meek, pure, pious Christabel—whose young virgin life has been wholly dedicated to her Father and her God?

But here are Coleridge's Poetical Works lying before us—and our chief wish in what we have now been saying, and are going to say, is, that all the young lovers of poetry will provide themselves with the three volumes—and study them till they come to feel and understand all therein contained, more profoundly than we, their grey-headed adviser, who were familiar with "all of wonderful and wild" before they were born.

These delightful volumes are divided into four compartments—Juvenile Poems—Sibylline Leaves — Miscellaneous Poems—and Dramas, original or translations. All the compositions in the first were the product of boyhood, or early youth; many in the second of a season of life that belonged still to the strong spring of manhood; and all the rest—with a few assuredly beautiful, but perhaps not very important, exceptions—were the rich growth of life's summer, ripened in the sunshine of rejoicing genius, yet even the most luxuriant not untouched with a shade of sorrow, and their loveliness not undimmed with tears. Strange and sad to think, that all the poetry of this divinely endowed spirit should have been breathed into utterance before his thirtieth year! For other thirty years and upwards, many a profound response was given forth by his voice from the temple's inner shrine—and recorded in language that will never die. Much of that philosophy is poetry, too, and of the highest; but it is lawful in those who loved him—and looked up to him as one of the largest lights of the age—to lament that his harp, so many-stringed, and which he could sweep with a master's hand, should so long have been mute, especially while it seemed all the while to need but a breath to reanimate

> "The soul of music, sleeping in the chords."

Without caring about the order of time—for over all the poetry of Coleridge, whether boy or man, when conversant with nature, hangs the same one beautiful spirit of love and delight—let us look at some more of his inspirations, and see how his very senses are refined by his imagination.

Coleridge had not what is commonly called an ear for music; and the more's the pity. An ear for music is a great mystery, but the want of it is a greater mystery still—especially in poets; and yet, if you believe them and their friends, many true poets have possessed not that source of delight—the purest that flows in the soul. Yet music affected him deeply—and his "Lines composed in a Concert-room," as rich as simple, must be far dearer to St Cecilia than Dryden's and Pope's pompous odes. The poem appears steeped in music, like a full-blown rose in dew. The second and third stanzas we have always felt to be expressed too strongly; yet a friend of our heart told us that the instant transition from them, in their almost grating harshness, made by enchanted memory to far-off passages in evanished being, in their coming back still more divine, never fails to transport him into a blissful world.

"Nor cold, nor stern my soul! yet I detest
These scented rooms, where, to a gaudy throng,
Heaves the proud harlot her distended breast,
In intricacies of laborious song.

These feel not Music's genuine power, nor deign
To melt at Nature's passion-warbled plaint;
But when the long-breathed singer's uptrilled strain
Bursts in a squall—they gape for wonderment.

Hark! the deep buzz of vanity and hate!
Scornful, yet envious, with self-torturing sneer
My lady eyes some maid of humbler state,
While the pert captain, or the primmer priest,
Prattles accordant scandal in her ear.

O give me, from this heartless scene released,
To hear our old musician, blind and gray
(Whom stretching from my nurse's arms I kissed),
His Scottish tunes and warlike marches play,
By moonshine, on the balmy summer-night,
The while I dance amid the tedded hay
With merry maids, whose ringlets toss in light.

Or lies the purple evening on the bay
Of the calm glossy lake, O let me hide
Unheard, unseen, behind the alder-trees,
For round their roots the fisher's boat is tied,

On whose trim seat doth Edmund stretch at ease,
And while the lazy boat sways to and fro,
Breathes in his flute sad airs, so wild and slow,
That his own cheek is wet with quiet tears.

But O, dear Anne! when midnight wind careers,
And the gust pelting on the outhouse shed
Makes the cock shrilly on the rain-storm crow,
To hear thee sing some ballad full of woe,
Ballad of shipwrecked sailor floating dead
Whom his own true-love buried in the sands!
Thee, gentle woman, for thy voice re-measures
Whatever tones and melancholy pleasures
The things of Nature utter; birds or trees
Or moan of ocean-gale in weedy caves,
Or where the stiff grass mid the heath-plant waves,
Murmur and music thin of sudden breeze."

These exquisite lines are placed among the Sibylline Leaves—but here are some exceedingly sweet, which we find among the Juvenile Poems. Even in moods little elevated—and in which the current of thought and feeling flows gently along simple scenery—the true poet is recognised in the whole tone of his inner being, musically tempered to repose that belongs to a quieter world than this, yet brings this, as if by a silent operation of nature, within that undisturbed sphere. This earth, without becoming unsubstantial or aerial, waxes wondrous still and pure—all unlike the earth men tread with wayfaring weary feet—yet green with human hopes, murmuring with human joys, and not without the whisper of sorrows secreted in the glimmering glades of the old woods. Of this character—like music by moonlight—are the "Lines to a Beautiful Spring in a Village."

"Once more, sweet Stream! with slow foot wandering near
I bless thy milky waters cold and clear.
Escaped the flashing of the noontide hours,
With one fresh garland of Pierian flowers
(Ere from thy zephyr-haunted brink I turn)
My languid hand shall wreath thy mossy urn.
For not through pathless grove with murmur rude
Thou soothest the sad wood-nymph, Solitude;
Nor thine unseen in cavern depths to well,
The hermit-fountain of some dripping cell!
Pride of the Vale! thy useful streams supply
The scattered cots and peaceful hamlet nigh.

The elfin tribe around thy friendly banks
With infant uproar and soul-soothing pranks,
Released from school, their little hearts at rest,
Launch paper navies on thy waveless breast,
The rustic here at eve with pensive look
Whistling lorn ditties leans upon his crook,
Or starting pauses with hope-mingled dread
To list the much-loved maid's accustomed tread ;
She, vainly mindful of her dame's command,
Loiters, the long-filled pitcher in her hand.

Unboastful Stream ! thy fount with pebbled falls
The faded form of past delight recalls,
What time the morning sun of Hope arose,
And all was joy ; save when another's woes
A transient gloom upon my soul imprest,
Like passing clouds impictured on thy breast.
Life's current then ran sparkling to the noon,
Or silvery stole beneath the pensive Moon :
Ah ! now it works rude brakes and thorns among,
Or o'er the rough rock bursts and foams along ! "

These lines were composed in very early life—and some of them might possibly be improved in the expression ; but here is an Inscription absolutely perfect :—

" This Sycamore, oft musical with bees,—
Such tents the Patriarchs loved ! O long unharmed
May all its aged boughs o'er-canopy
The small round basin, which this jutting stone
Keeps pure from falling leaves ! Long may the Spring,
Quietly as a sleeping infant's breath,
Send up cold waters to the traveller
With soft and even pulse ! Nor ever cease
Yon tiny cone of sand its soundless dance,
Which at the bottom, like a Fairy's page,
As merry and no taller, dances still,
Nor wrinkles the smooth surface of the Fount.
Here twilight is and coolness : here is moss,
A soft seat, and a deep and ample shade.
Thou may'st toil far and find no second tree.
Drink, Pilgrim, here ; here, rest ! and if thy heart
Be innocent, here too shalt thou refresh
Thy Spirit, listening to some gentle sound,
Or passing gale, or hum of murmuring bees ! "

If you do not feel that such compositions as these, unpre-

tending and humble as they are, are nevertheless the finest poetry, you had better burn your books at once—all your books of the bards — and confine yourself to practical chemistry. Congenial with them, but of a higher character, are many passages of "Fears in Solitude"—a composition of a later date—when the poet indeed was in the prime of youthful manhood. As yet he could have been benefited but little by the conversation of Wordsworth—yet the poem is inspired with the true Wordsworthian spirit—and the versification, without being very various or pauseful, is felt to obey, in all its movements, the commands of a gentle, or a grave, or an indignant mood—the poet's love of country, though passionate, being throughout ennobled by his love of humankind.

> "Oh! my countrymen!
> We have offended very grievously,
> And been most tyrannous. From east to west
> A groan of accusation pierces Heaven!"

But our object now is to show the kind of communing Coleridge then held with nature, rather than the views he took of the character and conduct of this nation. Such sentiments as we have now quoted kindle forth, and burst out, through the calm in which his gentler genius envelops the whole region of his natal land. That England should not have been true to the cause of humanity—and in much he believed she had been false—gave rise in his heart to grief and anger—moral both; but as they ebbed—or subsided—or were exhausted in eloquent outpourings—more beautiful before the eyes of his imagination reappeared England's hills, and vales, and fields—because of the almost unfilial fit of indignation in which he, "not sure a man ungently made," had dared to reprobate his country's crimes. With love in his heart he begins, and with love in his heart he concludes the strain—and it is those exquisite passages we wish to lay before them we love, as most characteristic at once of the genius and the disposition of the poet.

> "A green and silent spot, amid the hills,
> A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
> No singing sky-lark ever poised himself.
> The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,
> Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,

All golden with the never-bloomless furze,
Which now blooms most profusely: but the dell,
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
As vernal cornfield, or the unripe flax,
When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
The level sunshine glimmers with green light.
Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!
Which all, methinks, would love; but chiefly he,
The humble man, who, in his youthful years
Knew just so much of folly, as had made
His early manhood more securely wise!
Here he might lie on fern or withered heath,
While from the singing-lark (that sings unseen
The minstrelsy that solitude loves best),
And from the sun, and from the breezy air,
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;
And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of nature!
And so, his senses gradually wrapt
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing-lark;
That singest like an angel in the clouds!"

This is in itself a poem. But the times were troubled; and no man—so felt the Poet—was entitled long to indulge even in such dreams, though they were from heaven. Therefore he breaks the spell of that deep enchantment of peace, and cries to himself in the solitude—

"My God! it is a melancholy thing
For such a man, who would full fain preserve
His soul in calmness, yet perforce must feel
For all his human brethren—oh! my God!
It weighs upon the heart that he must think
What uproar and what strife may now be chasing
This way or that way o'er these silent hills."

The "Fears in Solitude" were conceived during the alarm of an Invasion—and the danger lay in our own sins. The Poet therefore tells his brethren "most bitter truths, but without bitterness"—some of which it might be for their good were they to be told again; for though the evil has changed its form and aspect, it is the same evil still, and springs from the

same deep roots—that almost seem ineradicable—in the human heart. But here comes the delightful close—an Invocation, and a Warning, and a Blessing, that the patriot sons of Britain may sing aloud, while her cliffs fling back the seas.

"But, O dear Britain! O my Mother Isle!
Needs must thou prove a name most dear and holy
To me, a son, a brother, and a friend,
A husband, and a father! who revere
All bonds of natural love, and find them all
Within the limits of thy rocky shores.
O native Britain! O my Mother Isle!
How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the God in nature,
All lovely and all honourable things,
Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joy and greatness of its future being?
There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul
Unborrowed from my country. O divine
And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole
And most magnificent temple, in the which
I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
Loving the God that made me!

"May my fears,
My filial fears, be vain! and may the vaunts
And menace of the vengeful enemy
Pass like the gust, that roared and died away
In the distant tree: which heard, and only heard
In this low dell, bowed not the delicate grass.

"But now the gentle dew-fall sends abroad
The fruitlike perfume of the golden furze:
The light has left the summit of the hill,
Though still a sunny gleam lies beautiful,
Aslant the ivied beacon. Now farewell,
Farewell awhile, O soft and silent spot!
On the green sheep-track, up the heathy hill,
Homeward I wind my way, and lo! recalled
From bodings that have well-nigh wearied me,
I find myself upon the brow, and pause

Startled! And after lonely sojourning
In such a quiet and surrounded nook,
This burst of prospect, here the shadowy main,
Dim tinted, there the mighty majesty
Of that huge amphitheatre of rich
And elmy fields, seems like society—
Conversing with the mind, and giving it
A livelier impulse and a dance of thought!
And now, beloved Stowey! I behold
Thy church-tower, and, methinks, the four huge elms
Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend;
And close behind them, hidden from my view,
Is my own lowly cottage, where my babe
And my babe's mother dwell in peace! With light
And quickened footsteps thitherward I tend,
Remembering thee, O green and silent dell!
And grateful that by nature's quietness
And solitary musings, all my heart
Is softened, and made worthy to indulge
Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind.

"Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement"—"the Lime-tree Bower my Prison"—and the "Nightingale"—are all full of the same delight in nature—a delight which grew more and more creative of beauty—making the food it fed on, and devoutly worshipping the only true—that is, the imaginary world. In these and other compositions of equal and kindred excellence, the poet's heart and imagination minister to each other; emotions and images come upon us with united power; and even when metaphysical, more than seems safe in the poetry of passion, there is such a warmth and glow in the winged words, wheeling in airy circles not inextricably involved, that Mind or Intellect itself moves us in a way we should not have believed possible, till we experience the pleasure of accompanying its flights—or rather of being upborne and wafted on its dovelike but eagle-strong wings. The law of association is illustrated in the "Nightingale" more philosophically than by Hartley or Brown; and how profound to the understanding heart is the truth in that one line—sure as Holy Writ—were man but faithful to his Maker,

"In nature there is nothing melancholy."

In not one of the poems we have yet quoted or mentioned,

can it be truly said that there is any approach to the sublime. Indeed, only in the "Fears in Solitude" might we be justified in expecting such a strain—and the subjects of some of the other pieces necessarily exclude both sentiment and imagery of that character. In the "Fears in Solitude" there is, as we have seen, much stately and sustained beauty; and we are not only roused, but raised by the pealing music. In the happiest passages, even on reflection, we miss little that might or should have been there—though something; and it would be ungrateful to criticise in our cooler moments what so charmed us in our glow, or to doubt the potency of the spell that had so well done its master's work. In much of what we have not quoted —though the whole is above pitch and reach of common powers—there is a good deal of exaggeration, and we fear some untruth—as if sense were sometimes almost sacrified to sound —and the poet's eyes blinded with the dust raised by the whirlwind of passion, carrying him along the earth, and not up the ether. But in one poem, Coleridge, in a fit of glorious enthusiasm, has reached the true sublime. Out of the Bible, no diviner inspiration was ever worded than the "Hymn before sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni." We doubt if there be any single strain equal to it in Milton or Wordsworth. If there be, it is Adam's Hymn in Paradise. The instantaneous Impersonation of Mont Blanc into a visible spirit, brings our whole capacity of adoration into power, and we join mighty Nature in praise and worship of God. As the hymn continues to ascend the sky, we accompany the magnificent music on wings up the holy mountain, till in its own shadow it disappears, and

> "We worship the invisible alone."

That trance is broken, and the Earthen Grandeur reappears, clothed with all attributes of beauty and of glory, by words that create and kindle as they flow, as if language were omnific.

> "Companion of the morning star at dawn,
> Thyself Earth's rosy star, and of the dawn
> Co-herald: wake! oh wake, and utter praise!"

How does not imagination embrace, with a spirit of worship, all those lifeless things—now lifeless no more—and how they all sympathise with the Poet's song—

" Ye pine-groves ! with your soft and soul-like sounds !
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder God."

Yet the sublime is often tinged with the beautiful—and the beautiful is often prevalent for glimpses—for the hymn is a hymn of love as well as of awe ; and both emotions are but one as we exclaim,—

" Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost."

But why waste our weak words in vain—when here is the Hymn—once heard by us from the poet's own lips, by sunrise among the coves of Helvellyn—and can it be that the fire soft as music, and the music clear as fire, that burned and breathed there, are extinguished—and those lips now cold and mute !

" Hast thou a charm to stay the morning star
In his steep course ? So long he seems to pause
On thy bald awful head, O sovran Blanc !
The Arve and Arveiron at thy base
Rave ceaselessly ; but thou, most awful Form !
Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines,
How silently ! Around thee and above
Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,
An ebon mass : methinks thou piercest it,
As with a wedge ! But when I look again,
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,
Thy habitation from eternity !
O dread and silent Mount ! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought : entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone.

Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,
So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my thought,
Yea, with my life and life's own secret joy :
Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, transfused,
Into the mighty vision passing—there
As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven !

Awake, my soul ! not only passive praise
Thou owest ! not alone these swelling tears,
Mute thanks and secret ecstasy ! Awake,
Voice of sweet song ! Awake, my Heart, awake !
Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my Hymn.

Thou first and chief, sole sovran of the Vale!
O struggling with the darkness all the night,
And visited all night by troops of stars,
Or when they climb the sky or when they sink:
Companion of the morning star at dawn,
Thyself Earth's rosy star, and of the dawn
Co-herald: wake! oh wake, and utter praise!
Who sank thy sunless pillars deep in Earth?
Who filled thy countenance with rosy light?
Who made thee parent of perpetual streams?

And you, ye five wild torrents fiercely glad!
Who called you forth from night and utter death,
From dark and icy caverns called you forth,
Down those precipitous, black, jagged rocks,
For ever shattered and the same for ever?
Who gave you your invulnerable life,
Your strength, your speed, your fury, and your joy,
Unceasing thunder and eternal foam?
And who commanded (and the silence came),
Here let the billows stiffen, and have rest?

Ye ice-falls! ye that from the mountain's brow
Adown enormous ravines slope amain—
Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge!
Motionless torrents! silent cataracts!
Who made you glorious as the gates of Heaven
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?—
God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,
Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, God!
God! sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice!
Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds!
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God!

Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost!
Ye wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest!
Ye eagles, playmates of the mountain storm!
Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds!
Ye signs and wonders of the element!
Utter forth God, and fill the hills with praise!

Thou, too, hoar Mount! with thy sky-pointing peaks,
Oft from whose feet the avalanche, unheard,
Shoots downward, glittering through the pure serene
Into the depth of clouds, that veil thy breast—
Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low
In adoration, upward from thy base
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,
To rise before me—Rise, O ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of incense, from the Earth!
Thou kingly Spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven,
Great hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God."

We do not know that there is a truly great ode in our language; but there are many noble ones, and among them must be placed one of the three odes of Coleridge. Laud to the skies, ye who choose, the odes of Dryden and Pope; but to our eyes they are lost before they reach the lower strata of clouds. Were we to liken them to balloons, we should say that the silk is well inflated, and better painted; but that the aeronauts, on taking their seats, are too heavy for the power of ascension, so that luckily the cords are not cut, and the globes are contented to adhere to the dædal earth. Gray's odes are far finer, and, though somewhat too formal, perhaps, the Welsh bard is full of Greek fire. Some of Mason's choruses are sonorous, and swing along not unmajestically; and Tom Warton caught no small portion of the true lyrical spirit —witness his Kilkerran Castle song. But Collins far surpassed them all—and his odes are all exquisitely beautiful—except his Ode to Freedom, and it is sublime. Let us call it, then, and contradict ourselves, the only truly great ode in the English language. Wordsworth's Ode on the Immortality of the Soul is pervaded by profoundest thought—philosophical in its spirit throughout—in many parts poetical in his very finest vein—and in some, more than is usual with him, impassioned; but the poet does not carry, much less hurry, us along with him—the movements are sometimes too slow and laborious, though stately and majestic—and though often many of

the transitions are lyrical—nay, though, as a whole, it is a grand lyrical poem, it is not an Ode, and nobody will call it so who has read Pindar. His "Dion" is an Ode, but is deficient in impetuosity; and that Image of the Swan on Locarno's wave, beautiful as it is in itself, is too elaborate for its place, nor yet enough original to open with such pomp such an ambitious strain. But we shall have an article on Odes in an early Number—in which we hope to make good all we have said, and far more—and shall not then forget Campbell, who, in our estimation, stands next to Collins.

Coleridge has written three Odes—"Dejection," "France," "The Departing Year." We have already quoted part of "Dejection;"—and perhaps the finest part of what is all good —nor have we room for more—except a wild passage about the Wind, which nobody would have thought of writing, or could have written, but Coleridge. But, strangely touching in itself, it not only occupies too much space in the Ode, but is too quaint for a composition of such high and solemn character.

"Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st devil's yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among;
Thou actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of a host in rout,
With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans and tremulous shudderings—all is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright,
And temper'd with delight,
As Otway's self had framed the tender lay,
'Tis of a little child,
Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way,
And now moans low, in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear."

The transition from this fanciful rather than imaginative dallying with the midnight wind, to an invocation to gentle Sleep, whom he prays to visit his beloved,

> "While all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
> Silent as if they watched the sleeping earth,"

is very tender and very beautiful; and the feeling is perfected in peace at the harmonious close of the ode, which is as natural as its commencement is artificial. It begins thus—

> "Well! if the bard was weather-wise who made
> The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
> This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
> Unroused by winds that ply a busier trade,
> Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,
> Or the dull sobbing draft that moans and rakes
> Upon the strings of this Æolian lute,
> Which better far were mute."

Surely that is, if not affected, far from being easy language; and, to our ear, the very familiar exclamation "Well!" is not in keeping with the character of what is—or ought to be—that of an ode. What follows is even less to our mind.

> "For, lo! the new moon, winter bright!
> And overspread with phantom light
> (With swimming phantom light o'erspread,
> But rimm'd and circled by a silver thread),
> I see the old moon in her lap, foretelling
> The coming on of rain," &c.

How inferior the effect of this overwrought picture (and in his poetry nothing is underwrought—for he was only at times too lavish of his riches), to that of the verse he expands from "the grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spens!"

> "Late, late yestreen, I saw the new moon,
> With the old moon in her arm;
> And I fear, I fear, my master dear,
> We shall have a deadly storm."

In the ballad, the "deadly storm" is predicted from one omen, and in the fewest possible words—and in as few is told the sinking of the ship. In the ode, the meteorological notions, though true, and poetically worded, are got up with too much

care and effort—and the storm passed, and played the part of Much ado about Nothing, among cliff-caves and tree-tops that soon returned to their former equanimity. 'Tis an ingenious and eloquent exercitation of the fancy—touched, as we have seen, and more than touched, in parts imbued, with the breath of a higher power—but it wants that depth, truth, and sincerity of passion, without which there can be no "great ode."

This Ode deals with dreams—day dreams and night dreams—and dreams are from Jove—thoughts and feelings glanced back from heaven on earth—for on earth was their origin and first dominion; but on their return to earth they are of higher and holier power, because etherealised; dreams dearest to the poet as a man, with his own environments, of which home, and the hopes of home—with love illumined—are the strongest and the chief. They have all a personal interest to him; in them is his very being, and his very being is theirs—at least it is his desire and design to indulge and declare that belief—though we have not hesitated to hint that "the higher mood" is not sustained,—and hence imperfect execution—so that while many parts are eminently beautiful, something, nay much, is felt to be wanting—and the Ode—so call it—though brilliant, and better than brilliant—with all his genius—is not a sincere, satisfying, and consummate Whole.

In the "Departing Year," the Poet takes a wider sweep—or we should perhaps speak more truly were we to say, that in it his personal individuality is merged in his citizenship or patriotism—and that again swallowed up in his philanthropy or enthusiasm in the cause of liberty all over the world. In the prefixed argument we are told, "the Ode commences with an address to the Divine Providence, that regulates with one vast harmony all the events of time, however calamitous some of them may appear to mortals. The second strophe calls on men to suspend their present joys and sorrows, and devote them for a while to the cause of human nature in general. *The first epode speaks of the Empress of Russia, who died of an apoplexy on the* 17*th of November* 1796*; having first concluded a subsidiary treaty with the kings combined against France.* The first and second antistrophe describe the image of the departing year, and as in a vision. The second epode prophesies, in anguish of spirit, the downfall of the country." No "Great Ode" could have such an argument. It is false and hollow,

and altogether delusive. There was here no true spirit of prophecy—and the poet who is deceived by appearances, in vain aspires to soar into the Empyrean. The wings of genius must be imped with the plumes of truth—else the flight will be short and low, and fluttering it will fall to earth.

Perhaps we have just now employed too strong an image; but of bad politics it is not possible to make good poetry; and though Coleridge's politics were never bad—how could they, being those of a man of genius and virtue?—they were even at this period very imperfect, and very imperfect, therefore, is this political poem. The death by apoplexy of the Empress of Russia, on the 17th November 1796—as stated in the obituary to the Ode—is exulted over in the Ode itself with undignified violence of declamation, which in spite of very magnificent mouthing sounds very like a scold:—

> "Stunned by death's *twice mortal* mace,
> No more on murder's lurid face
> Th' insatiate hag shall gloat with drunken eye!"
>
> . . . . .
>
> "The exterminating fiend is fled—
> Foul her life and dark her doom."

All true. But how unlike Isaiah in his ire! We fear, too, that the feeling is a false one, in which he addresses, on that event, the manes of them who died on "Warsaw's plain:"—

> "And them that erst at Ismael's tower,
> When human ruin choked the streams,
> Fell in conquest's glutted hour."

The poet who calls upon ghosts must, in his invocation, speak like a heaven-commissioned prophet. His words must sound as if they had power to pierce the grave, and force it to give up its dead. To evoke them, shrouded or unshrouded, from the clammy clay—bloodless or clotted with blood—needs a mighty incantation. The dry bones would not stir—not a corpse would groan—at such big but weak words as these:—

> "Spirits of the uncoffined slain,
> Sudden blasts of triumph swelling,
> Oft, at night, in misty train,
> Rush around her narrow dwelling."
>
> . . . . .

"Nightly armies of the dead
Dance like death-fires round her tomb!
There with prophetic song relate,
Each some tyrant murderer's fate."

"Sudden blasts of triumph," indeed, swelling from the uncoffined slain! Alas! dismal is Hades—and neither vengeance nor triumph dwell with the dead. But if fancy will parley with the disembodied, and believe that they will obey her call, let her speak not with the tongue of men, but of angels—and on an occasion so great, at a time so portentous, that the troubled hearts of the living may be willing to think that a human being can "create a soul under the ribs of death." But here there is no passion—no power. "The mighty armies of the dead" keep rotting on. Their dancing days are over. Yet if they could indeed become "death-fires," dance would they not round the tomb of the imperial murderess—nor would they with "prophetic song relate *each* some tyrant murderer's doom." If true Polish patriot ghosts, with Kosciusko at their head, they would rather have implored heaven to let them be their own avengers—and that one spectre, pursued by many spectres, might fix on the mercy-seat its black eye-sockets in vain.

The time was when even Coleridge, alas! could say,

"Not yet enslaved, *not wholly vile*,
O Albion!!"

Nor better, higher comfort, at the close could he find, than to desert his lost country, and

"Recentre my immortal mind
In the deep Sabbath of meek self-content."

Yet there are many flashes of elevated thought in the midst of smoky clouds whose turbulence is not grandeur, and one strain, and one only, approaches the sublime.

"Departing Year! 'twas on no earthly shore
My soul beheld thy vision! Where alone,
Voiceless and stern, before the cloudy throne,
Aye Memory sits: thy robe inscribed with gore,
With many an unimaginable groan
Thou storied'st thy sad hours! Silence ensued,
Deep silence o'er the ethereal multitude,
Whose locks with wreaths, whose wreaths with glories shone.

Then, his eye wild ardours glancing,
From the choired gods advancing,
The Spirit of the earth made reverence meet,
And stood up, beautiful before the cloudy seat.

Throughout the blissful throng,
Hushed were harp and song;
Till wheeling round the throne the Lampads seven,
(The Mystic words of Heaven)
Permissive signal make:
The fervent Spirit bowed, then spread his wings and spake!
'Thou in stormy blackness throning
Love and uncreated Light,
By the Earth's unsolaced groaning,
Seize thy terrors, Arm of night!
By peace with proffered insult scared,
Masked hate and envying scorn!
By years of havoc yet unborn!
And hunger's bosom to the frost-winds bared!
But chief by Afric's wrongs,
Strange, horrible, and foul!
By what deep guilt belongs
To the deaf Synod, "full of gifts and lies!"
By wealth's insensate laugh! by torture's howl!
Avenger, rise!
For ever shall the thankless Island scowl,
Her quiver full, and with unbroken bow?
Speak! from thy storm-black Heaven O speak aloud!
And on the darkling foe
Open thine eye of fire from some uncertain cloud!
O dart the flash! O rise and deal the blow!
The Past to thee, to thee the Future cries!
Hark! how wide Nature joins her groans below!
Rise, God of Nature! rise.'"

We have said that this is almost sublime; yet we have never been able to read it without a sense—more or less painful—not of violation of the most awful reverence, for that would be too strong a word—but of too daring an approximation to the "cloudy seat" by a creature yet in the clay. The lips of the poet must indeed be touched with a coal from heaven, who invokes the Most High, and calls upon the God of Nature to avenge and redress Nature's wrongs. A profounder piety than was possible with the creed the poet then held, would have

either sealed his lips, or inspired them with higher because humbler words. Insincere he never was; but in those days his philosophical and poetical religion spoke in words fitter for the ear of Jove than Jehovah. And that the mood in which he composed this passage was one—not of true faith, but of false enthusiasm—is manifest from the gross exaggeration of the feeling which is said to have followed the passing away of the vision. These lines should yet be struck out of the Ode:

> "The voice had ceased, the vision fled;
> Yet still I gasped and reeled with dread.
> And ever, when the dream of night
> Renews the phantom to my sight,
> Cold sweat-drops gather on my limbs;
> My ears throb hot; my eye-balls start;
> My brain with horrid tumult swims;
> Wild is the tempest of my heart;
> And my thick and struggling breath
> Imitates the toil of death!
> No stranger agony confounds
> The soldier on the war-field spread,
> When all foredone with toil and wounds,
> Deathlike he dozes among heaps of dead!
> (The strife is o'er, the daylight fled,
> And the night-wind clamours hoarse!
> See! the starting wretch's head
> Lies pillowed on a brother's corse!)"

Shelley, we are told, "pronounced the 'France' to be the finest English Ode of modern times." Not if Gray and Collins belong to modern times—but assuredly it is a noble composition. "France" is a misnomer. It is in truth an Ode to Liberty—and a palinode. We quote it entire—for it will be new to tens of thousands—never, we believe, having before been so quoted in any periodical.

> "Ye Clouds! that far above me float and pause,
> Whose pathless march no mortal may control
> Ye Ocean waves! that, wheresoe'er ye roll,
> Yield homage only to eternal laws!
> Ye Woods! that listen to the night-birds singing,
> Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,
> Save when your own imperious branches swinging,
> Have made a solemn music of the wind!

Where, like a man beloved of God,
Through glooms, which never woodman trod,
How oft, pursuing fancies holy,
My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,
Inspired, beyond the guess of folly,
By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!
O ye loud Waves! and O ye Forests high!
And O ye Clouds that far above me soared!
Thou rising Sun! thou blue rejoicing Sky!
Yea, everything that is and will be free!
Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
With what deep worship I have still adored
The spirit of divinest Liberty.

When France in wrath her giant limbs upreared,
And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea,
Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free,
Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared!
With what a joy my lofty gratulation
Unawed I sang, amid a slavish band:
And when to whelm the disenchanted nation,
Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,
The Monarchs marched in evil day,
And Britain joined the dire array;
Though dear her shores and circling ocean,
Though many friendships, many youthful loves
Had swoln the patriot emotion
And flung a magic light o'er all her hills and groves;
Yet still my voice, unaltered, sang defeat
To all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance,
And shame too long delayed and vain retreat!
For ne'er, O Liberty! with partial aim
I dimmed thy light or damped thy holy flame;
But blessed the pæans of delivered France,
And hung my head and wept at Britain's name.

'And what,' I said, 'though Blasphemy's loud scream
With that sweet music of deliverance strove!
Though all the fierce and drunken passions wove
A dance more wild than e'er was maniac's dream!
Ye storms that round the dawning east assembled,
The Sun was rising, though ye hid his light!'
And when, to soothe my soul, that hoped and trembled,
The dissonance ceased, and all seemed calm and bright;
When France her front deep-scarr'd and gory

Concealed with clustering wreaths of glory;
When, insupportably advancing,
Her arm made mockery of the warrior's tramp;
While timid looks of fury glancing,
Domestic treason, crushed beneath her fatal stamp,
Writhed like a wounded dragon in its gore;
Then I reproached my fears that would not flee;
'And soon,' I said, 'shall Wisdom teach her lore
In the low huts of them that toil and groan!
And, conquering by her happiness alone,
Shall France compel the nations to be free,
Till Love and Joy look round, and call the earth their own.'

Forgive me, Freedom! O forgive those dreams!
I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament,
From bleak Helvetia's icy cavern sent—
I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained streams!
Heroes, that for your peaceful country perished,
And ye that, fleeing, spot your mountain-snows
With bleeding wounds; forgive me, that I cherished
One thought that ever blessed your cruel foes!
To scatter rage, and traitorous guilt,
Where Peace her jealous home had built;
A patriot-race to disinherit
Of all that made their stormy wilds so dear;
And with inexpiable spirit
To taint the bloodless freedom of the mountaineer—
O France that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,
And patriot only in pernicious toils,
Are these thy boasts, Champion of human kind?
To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway,
Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey;
To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils
From freemen torn; to tempt and to betray?

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
They burst their manacles and wear the name
Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!
O Liberty! with profitless endeavour
Have I pursued thee, many a weary hour;
But thou nor swell'st the victor's strain, nor ever
Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human power.
Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee,
(Nor prayer, nor boastful name delays thee),

Alike from Priestcraft's happy minions,
And factious Blasphemy's obscener slaves,
Thou speedest on thy subtle pinions,
The guide of homeless winds, and playmate of the waves!
And there I felt thee!—on that sea-cliff's verge,
Whose pines, scarce travelled by the breeze above,
Had made one murmur with the distant surge!
Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples bare,
And shot my being through earth, sea, and air,
Possessing all things with intensest love,
O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there."

It is indeed a noble Ode—and we agree with Shelley. Notice—but you have noticed it—though notice is a puny word but pretty expressive—how it revolves upon itself—and is circular, like music—and like the sky, if earth did not break the radiant round. The last strain is in the same spirit as the first—and did nothing intervene, there would be felt needless repetition of imagery and sentiment. But much intervenes—the whole main course and current of the Ode. You float along with the eloquent lyrist, who is at once impassioned and imaginative—full of ire, and full of hope; and you end where you began—on the sea-cliff's edge, with the foam so far below your feet you but *see* it roar—for to your ear the waves are silent as the clouds far far farther above your head; and all above and below and around, at the close now, as the opening then, earth, sea, and air—mute and motionless, or loud and driving—bespeak or betoken, are or symbolise—"the spirit of divinest Liberty!"

Yet, after all, this is not the highest mood of imagination. In the highest she would have scorned the elements. Earth, sea, air, would to her have been nothing, while she saw in all their pomp the free faculties of the soul. Or the elements would have been her slaves—and the slaves of liberty—or, if you will, their servants, their ministers; and the winds and the waves would then have been indeed magnificent—in their glorious bondage working for man, the chartered child of God.

In an ode of the highest kind—of which the subject is external to the Poet—a kingdom or country—say France—the Poet, while he would make himself felt in the power of his pervading and creative spirit, would not choose to be, as

Coleridge is in this ode—not the most prominent personage merely—but the sole. It is different in such an ode as Wordsworth's Intimations of Immortality; for to enable us to comprehend them at all, he must bring them forth from his own soul, and show how they rose there, and how he felt them, and what they are in him, that we may compare the mysteries of our own life's earliest experiences with his—and regard them with clearer knowledge, and profounder awe, from discerning that our spirits are, and ever have been, in sympathy with that of Nature's Priest. But in "France," an Ode, Coleridge should not have spoken so much of himself—both of the present and the past—nor set himself right before the Spirit of Liberty, whom he fears he had offended in his "Ode to the Departing Year," or some other strain, in which he had expressed opinions proved false by events. Collins loved liberty as well as Coleridge; but in his glorious ode, he seldom, and shortly—only once or twice, and momentarily—is heard in his personality, and the voice is oracular as from a shrine.

It may seem to some that we have not done justice to these Odes; and it is not improbable that the fault may in some degree lie with ourselves—that our fancy and imagination are not sufficiently alive to such modes of poetical feeling and thought—too much devoted in their delight to other kinds of composition, to be either willing or able to follow or accompany such flights. But if we have underrated their merits, we make bold to say, that the chief cause of our having done so, is our admiration—in which we yield to none—of the original genius of Coleridge. That genius was too original transcendently to excel in Poetry, of which the model had been set, the mould cast, by the great poets of old—and which had been cultivated with high success by some gifted spirits of our own time. In his odes, his genius is engaged in imitation. It works in a fine spirit, but in trammels; his Pegasus is in training, and he takes his gallop in grand style; but Imagination hears afar off in the dust the hoofs of the desert-born. In short, be his Odes what they may, no one, on reading or hearing them read—nay, not even on hearing them recited by his own sweetest voice of purest silver—ever felt that undefinable delight that steals into the soul, and overflows it like one of its own unquestioned dreams, from "a repeated strain" of the veritable Coleridge.

Nay, we could almost find in our heart to extend the spirit of these remarks even to the "Remorse." So many great tragedies have been composed, and in so many styles of greatness—and such multitudes that are not great, but good—that it may be safely predicted that another great one will never be called into existence on any model now known—however numerous may be the future good. Coleridge wisely shunned Shakespeare; and we defy you to mention two dramas more unlike than "Macbeth" and "Remorse." But that drama is constructed on the model of Rowe and Otway. Neither in it, therefore, any more than in his odes, is Coleridge seen in the power of the originality of his genius—as to conception of design. But he is so seen in the mode of his execution, and in great splendour, though not in all his might. The play is full of poetry, nor is it deficient in action; for though the incidents are not many, they are striking or impressive—and there is a current felt setting in towards the shore of death. The characters of the good and of the guilty brothers are finely conceived and contrasted, and in nature. The catastrophe is brought about well, and is just; and Pity and Terror are relieved by an awful Joy, in the deliverance of the virtuous, and the prospect of their happy life. But the power of the play lies in the metaphysical exhibition of the passion of Remorse—in a character of very peculiar conformation; and though the workings of that mind may sometimes be somewhat too curiously, elaborately, and ostentatiously dealt with by the poet, who is then himself seen engaged in his magic, yet the beauty of the language, and the music of the versification—though neither the one nor the other are so dramatic as they might be—never lose their charm over us; and as we grow familiar with the rich, and ornamented, and even gorgeous style of the work, we forget that our living flesh-and-blood brethren speak not so—and are beguiled into the belief that such is their natural speech.

The Remorse, which is to be shown at work, is expressed, at the beginning, in a few words—and to evolve the meanings lying latent in these few words is the grand object of the drama.

> "Remorse is as the heart in which it grows;
> If that be gentle, it drops balmy dews
> Of true repentance; but if proud and gloomy,

It is a poison-tree, that, pierced to the inmost,
Weeps only tears of blood."

The heart of Ordonio is "dark and gloomy;" and on his death, inflicted by retributive justice, his noble brother solemnly pronounces the valedictory moral:—

"In these strange dread events,
Just Heaven instructs us with an awful voice,
That conscience rules us even against our choice.
Our inward monitress to guide or warn,
If listened to; but if repelled with scorn,
At length as dire Remorse she reappears,
Works on our guilty hopes and selfish fears!
Still bids remember! and still cries, Too late!
And while she scares us, goads us to our fate."

The play contains many passages of the most exquisite poetry—so very beautiful, indeed, that we care not for the impropriety of their introduction, considered dramatically—if there be impropriety in time or place—and feel that they justify themselves by the delight they impart. Here is a Soliloquy which first met our eyes in the Lyrical Ballads, before the "Remorse" was performed—and miserably performed we remember it was, though the scenery was good, and the music not amiss—that mournful Miserere, so Shakespearean—and which may be chanted, without losing any of its holy charm, after the dirge sung by the spirit of air in Prospero's enchanted Island.

"Here, sweet spirit, hear the spell,
Lest a blacker charm compel!
So shall the midnight breezes swell
With thy deep long-lingering knell.

And at evening evermore,
In a chapel on the shore,
Shall the chanter, sad and saintly,
Yellow tapers burning faintly,
Doleful masses chant for thee,
Miserere, Domine!

Hark! the cadence dies away
On the quiet moonlight sea:
The boatmen rest their oars and say
Miserere, Domine!"

The Soliloquy is spoken by Alvar in a dungeon, in which he has been thrown by his wicked brother Ordonio.

"ALV. And this place my forefathers made for man!
This is the process of our love and wisdom
To each poor brother who offends against us—
Most innocent, perhaps—and what if guilty?
Is this the only cure? Merciful God!
Each pore and natural outlet shrivelled up
By ignorance and parching poverty,
His energies roll back upon his heart
And stagnate and corrupt, till, changed to poison,
They break out on him, like a loathsome plague-spot!
Then we call in our pampered mountebanks;—
And this is their best cure! uncomforted
And friendless solitude, groaning and tears,
And savage faces, at the clanking hour,
Seen through the steam and vapours of his dungeon
By the lamp's dismal twilight! So he lies
Circled with evil, till his very soul
Unmoulds its essence, hopelessly deformed
By sights of evermore deformity!—
With other ministrations thou, O nature,
Healest thy wandering and distempered child:
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,
Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets;
Thy melodies of woods, and winds, and waters!
Till he relent, and can no more endure
To be a jarring and dissonant thing
Amid this general dance and minstrelsy;
But, bursting into tears, wins back his way,
His angry spirit healed and harmonised
By the benignant touch of love and beauty."

"Most musical, most melancholy!" and melancholy because of the music—for all divine music is so—in which the loveliest images of rejoicing gladness are enshrined. In Wordsworth you may meet with some kindred strain as sweet and high—at once elegy and hymn; yet there are tones here indescribably touching, that characterise the beauty as an emanation, in its most celestial mood, of the genius of Coleridge.

Teresa, the tender and the true, and by her tenderness and truth sustained in her long distress, in that sorest of all trials, when a wild crazed hope will break in on what would else be

the stillness of despair, is invested throughout with a mournful interest; and the scene where her father, Valdez, vainly renews his persuasions, that she would marry Ordonio, seeing that Alvar must be dead, is a charming specimen of that mingled poetry and pathos, which reminds one, but without any thought of its being an imitation, of the style of Massinger.

"TER. I hold Ordonio dear; he is your son,
And Alvar's brother.
VAL. Love him for himself,
Nor make the living wretched for the dead.
TER. I mourn that you should plead in vain, Lord Valdez;
But heaven hath heard my vow, and I remain
Faithful to Alvar, be he dead or living.
VAL. Heaven knows with what delight I saw your loves,
And could my heart's blood give him back to thee
I would die smiling. But these are idle thoughts!
Thy dying father comes upon my soul
With that same look with which he gave thee to me;
I held thee in my arms a powerless babe,
While thy poor mother, with a mute entreaty,
Fixed her faint eyes on mine. Ah! not for this,
That I should let thee feed thy soul with gloom
And with slow anguish wear away thy life,
The victim of a useless constancy.
I must not see thee wretched.
TER. There are woes
Ill bartered for the garishness of joy!
If it be wretched with an untired eye
To watch those skiey tints, and this green ocean;
Or in the sultry hour beneath some rock,
My hair dishevelled by the pleasant sea-breeze,
To shape sweet visions, and live o'er again
All past hours of delight! If it be wretched
To watch some bark, and fancy Alvar there,
To go through each minutest circumstance
Of the blest meeting, and to frame adventures
Most terrible and strange, and hear him tell them;
(As once I knew a crazy Moorish maid
Who dress'd her in her buried lover's clothes,
And o'er the smooth spring in the mountain cleft
Hung with her lute, and played the selfsame tune
He used to play, and listened to the shadow
Herself had made)—if this be wretchedness,

And if indeed it be a wretched thing
To trick out mine own deathbed, and imagine
That I had died, died just ere his return!
Then see him listening to my constancy,
Or hover round, as he at midnight oft
Sits on my grave, and gazes at the moon;
Or haply in some more fantastic mood,
To be in Paradise, and with choice flowers
Build up a bower where he and I might dwell,
And there to wait his coming! O my sire!
My Alvar's sire! if this be wretchedness
That eats away the life, what were it, think you,
If in a most assured reality
He should return, and see a brother's infant
Smile at him from my arms?
Oh what a thought!"

In early youth Coleridge conceived the highest idea of the genius of Schiller, and one of the finest of his sonnets was composed after his first perusal of *The Robbers*. But what can we say of his Translation of *Wallenstein?* That it is the best translation ever made; and that in it, the poem appears only somewhat more majestic—like the image of the noble hero himself reflected in a perfect mirror that, without distorting, magnifies.

But though we have now been enriching our pages (why will good people say that Maga is too sparing of poetry?) with specimens of compositions that would of themselves have given Coleridge a high place among the poets, we have scarcely spoken at all, and quoted not one word, of those that set him among the highest; nor need we surely at this day, at any length either speak of, or quote from, *Christabel* and the *Ancient Mariner;* yet while tens of thousands on tens of thousands of copies of poems, of far inferior excellence, in pamphlet shape and size, were fluttering far and wide over all the fashionable and unfashionable world, and Byron—Byron —Byron was in all literary and illiterary parties, morning, noon, and night, the catchword and reply—when Medora, and the names of other interesting lemans of pirates and robbers, were sighed or whispered from all manner of mouths—how seldom was heard the name of Coleridge—and then as if it belonged to some man "in a far countree!" and how rarely, though both sounds are beautiful—Christabel and Geraldine

—were they murmured by maid or matron! Yet maids and matrons all were devoted to romance, and so sensitive to the preternatural, that they wept to see the moonlight through the ghostlike hand of a heroine who held it up for no other reason in the world than to show that she had died a natural death of love! Byron himself—the idol of the hour—rejoiced to declare *Christabel* singularly wild and beautiful; Scott, that it had inspired the "Lay;" all our true poets delighted in the vision which they loved too well to loudly praise—for admiration is mute, or speaks in its trance but with uplifted eyes. But the sweet, soft, still breath of praise, like that of purest incense, arose from many a secret place, where genius and sensibility abided, and Coleridge, amidst the simpers of the silly, and the laughter of the light, and the scorn of the callous, and the abuse of the brutal, and the blackguardism of the beggar-poor—received the laurel crown woven by the hands of all the best of his brother bards—and wore it ever after cheerfully but without pride—round his lofty forehead —and it was green as ever the day he died.

Christabel is indeed, what Byron said it was, a singularly wild and original poem. No other words could so well characterise it. It did not appear in a dearth, but at a time when a flush of poetry overspread the land. Genius as high, as various, and as new as had ever adorned any era, was then exultingly running its victorious career—taking its far-sweeping aerial flights over its native seas and mountains—or bringing within the dominion of its wings the uttermost ends of the earth. All our best living poets had done their greatest—they had all achieved fame—some universal; and each bard had his own band of more devoted worshippers. The poets themselves knew right well, and so did almost all the poetical minds in England, that there was not within the four seas a brighter genius than Coleridge. But why had the sweet singer so long been mute? We know not—and it is far better for us all that we know not—much of what is always happening in one another's hearts; nor do we always distinctly understand—even while we feel it most—what is happening in our own. Perhaps Coleridge was not ambitious —perhaps the love of fame was not one of the most active principles of his nature—perhaps despondency too often dimmed the visions that were for ever passing before the

poet's eyes, and that in happier hours would have become all glorious with the light of song—or pleasanter to those who loved him, to believe that his visions were often too ethereal, in their floatings-by over the heaven of his imagination, to bear being *worded* even by him who knew better than all his compeers the most hidden mysteries of words—of those finest words that by their utterance give power to thought and delicacy to feeling, and in the very language of our lips lend our souls assurance that their origin is divine.

Christabel resembles no other poem, except inasmuch as it is a poem. Here was a new species of poetry, and the specimen was felt to be perfect. It was as if some bright consummate flower had been added to the families of the field—discovered growing by itself—with its own peculiar balm, and its own peculiar bloom—mournful as moonlight—delicate as the dawn—yet strong as day—and in its silken folds, by its own beauty, preserved unwithered in all weathers. Or may we liken the music of *Christabel* to that of some new instrument, constructed on a dream of the harps, on which in forgotten ages the old harpers played—ere all those castles were in ruins—and when the logs now lying black in the mosses were green trees rejoicing in the sky? True, at least, it is, that in all the hanging gardens of poetry—Imagination—the head-gardener—declares there is but one single *Christabel.*

What means the poem? Coleridge himself could not have answered that question—for it is a mystery. What is the meaning of any mood of Superstition? Who shall explain fear? One flutter shall make you dumb as frost. If ghosts come from graves—or fiends from regions deeper than all graves—or if heaven lets visit earth its saints and angels—and such has ever been the creed of Imagination—you must not hope, nay, you will not desire, that such intercommunion as may then befall shall bear any but a strange, wild, sad resemblance to that of life with life—when both are yet mortal, and the voices of both have as yet sounded but on this side of the boundary between time and eternity.

From the first moment you see her, do you not love Christabel? No wonder—for if you did not love her, you could have none—or but a hollow heart. Look at her!

> "Is the night chilly and dark?
> The night is chilly, but not dark.

The thin grey cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is grey:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak,
But moss and rarest mistletoe;
She kneels beneath the huge oak-tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is, she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree."

You love her, and you fear for her in her fear—yet what the dread, and what the danger, you know not, but that they are not from the common things of this world.

"The lady sprang up suddenly."
"It moaned as near as near can be."

What but an evil spirit could have terrified her so in such a trance, and with her unfinished prayer forgotten, forced her to her feet? The moan was wicked—perhaps from some hideous witch-hag, to look on whose ugsomeness would be to die.

"Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

'Mary mother, save me now!
(Said Christabel), And who art thou?'

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet."

What poet ever before made "frightful" such an Apparition? "and her voice was faint and sweet." Yet Christabel had that "moan" among the beatings of her heart—or worse, its suspension of all beatings, when, won by sight so bright, and sound so sweet, she said, nor more in her own new fear could say, "stretch forth thy hand and have no fear." The Lady's tale is touching, but in some strange way, that genius by a few sprinklings of dubious words effects, discoloured with tinges of untruth, unsuspected by the simple Christabel—for she is simple as innocence; and all the while the two are gliding together out of the wood—across the moat—the court—the hall—from stair to stair—till they reach her chamber-door—and

"Her gentle limbs she did undress,
And lay down in her loveliness"

—an impression of something evil designed against the good continues to be conveyed by circumstances so carelessly dropped, that each in itself may mean, perhaps, nothing; but the whole, by fine affinities working together as one, now convince us, and now leave us in doubt among a crowd of vague apprehensions, that in Geraldine's exceeding beauty is veiled one of the powers of darkness, and that Christabel is about to suffer some unimaginable woe. The story of the five warriors on white steeds furiously driving her on on her white palfrey —"and once we crossed the shade of night;"—her affected

—for we feel somehow it is not real—ignorance of all about them, and of when, and where, and why they left her—and yet it may be true;—"her gracious stars the lady blest"—hardly the words of a Christian lady on such a rescue, yet haply blameless;—her sinking down on the threshold as if beneath the weight of wicked intent towards her who mercifully lifts her up in her arms;—her incapacity of prayer—

> "And Christabel devoutly cried
> To the Lady by her side,
> 'Praise we the Virgin all divine
> Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!'
> 'Alas, alas!' said Geraldine,
> '*I cannot speak for weariness*'"—

yet she had been speaking eloquently—and yet faintness from fatigue may have come over her—who can say?—not Christabel, who fears not now, and only pities;—the moaning of the old mastiff in her sleep, of which we had before been told that she howls—as some say—"at seeing of my lady's shroud"—the shroud of Christabel's mother, who died the hour she herself was born;—from the ashes of the dead fire in the hall a tongue of light shooting out as the stranger lady passed by—and by that light her eye seen—and manifestly it is an evil eye—the dimming of the silver lamp "fastened to an angel's feet," as Geraldine sinks down upon the floor below, unable to bear the holy light;—her agitation, and transformation into a demoniac muttering curses at mention by Christabel of her mother's name, and proffer of "a wine of virtuous powers, my mother made it of wild-flowers," and which are all laid by the compassionate creature to the charge of that "ghastly ride;"—the restoration of the possessed to her senses, and more than her former beauty—when

> "The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
> And faintly said, ''tis over now!'
> Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
> Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
> She was most beautiful to see,
> Like a lady from a far countree,"—

all these occurrences happening momentarily in utter stillness and solitariness—ominous of far-away evil nearing and nearing—and many other half-lines—or single words freighted

with fear,—all sink down our heart for sake of the sinless Christabel—yet all have not prepared us for the shock that then comes—a horror hinted, not revealed—and indescribable as something shuddered at in sleep.

"But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
That vain it were her lids to close;
So half-way from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast;
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side——
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!"

Christabel is a dream—and so is the *Ancient Mariner*—though the poet does not call them dreams—and how many worlds, within the imagination of a great poet, are involved in the wide world of sleep! A poet's dream, put into poetry, is seen to be as obedient to laws as a philosopher's meditation put into prose—and though made up of the wild and wonderful, consistent with itself, as the gravest mood of speculative thought. A fairy's palace, and a mermaid's grot, are constructed by processes as skilful and scientific as the towers and temples of the cities of men—and the visionary architecture is as enduring as the Pyramids. Of the beauty or the grandeur of a thousand dreams, one beautiful or grand dream is built; and there it gleams or glooms among entities recognised as illustrative of the mystery of life—unsubstantial, but real—a fiction, but a truth. Imagination is no liar—a veracious witness she of events happening in her own domain—invisible to sense—and incredible to reason—till she pictures them in her own light; and then seeing is believing, and the miraculous creates its own faith. The ordinary rules of evidence are set aside—improbability is a word without meaning—and there is felt to be no limit to the possibilities of nature.

Unnatural! Nothing is unnatural that stirs our heartstrings —her voice it is, if from some depth within us steals a response. The preternatural—and the supernatural—thank Heaven—is an empire bounded only by the soul's desires—and what may bound the soul's desires? Not the night of baffled darkness, that lies, in infinitude, behind all the stars.

Coleridge has told us, in his *Biographia Literaria*, that he and Wordsworth used, during the first year of their friendship, frequently to converse on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting sympathy by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, he beautifully says,—"which accident of light and shade, while moonlight or sunset diffused over a true and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect), that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of just emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real, and real in *this* sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves. In this idea originated the plan of the 'Lyrical Ballads;' in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or, at least, romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a purer interest, and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of belief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and diverting it to the loveliness and the

wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand."

How gloriously Wordsworth has achieved his gracious object, all the world knows; in poetry that, beyond that of any other man, has purified and elevated all those feelings that constitute our faith in the goodness of God, as displayed in the external world, and in the internal senses by which we hold communion with nature. Coleridge fell far short of the completion of his magnificent design—from other causes than want of power; but *Christabel* is a fragment of the beautiful belonging to it, and the *Ancient Mariner* a whole of the sublime, in a region where the sublimities are as endless as the shapes of Cloudland which Fancy every moment can modify into a new world by a breath.

Coleridge was commanded by his genius to choose the sea, and sing of the power superstition holds in the empire of the hoary deep. "There was a Ship, quoth he," and at his bidding she sailed away into the realms of frost and snow. No good Ship the Endeavour circumnavigating the globe. No Fury bound on voyage of discovery to the Pole. No name hath she—captain's name too unknown—"the many men so beautiful," the only notice of the number of her crew—and such epithets are bestowed on them only as on deck they all lie dead. The sole survivor narrates "her travel's history," and he is—

> "Long, and lank, and brown
> As is the ribbed sea-sand."

The Ancient Mariner is laden with countless years; generation after generation has left him wandering to and fro over many lands; and his life, long as the raven's, has been all one dream of that dreadful voyage—silent as the grave—till ever and anon the ghastly fit waxes into words, and then "he hath strange powers of speech." To him the sweet and sacred festivities of the human world have no meaning—no being:—

> "'The bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
> And I am next of kin;
> The guests are met, the feast is set:
> May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he!
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The wedding-guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The wedding-guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner."

The magician has prepared his spell in his cave obscure remote from our ken, and the first words of the incantation have wrought a charm beneath which imagination delivers herself up in a moment, and surrenders herself, in full faith, to all the wonders and terrors that ensue, chasing to and fro in an empire chiller even with fear than with frost. "The bright-eyed mariner!" Ay, well may his eyes be bright—for has he not for scores of years been mad—and the "Spirit that dwells in frost and snow" his keeper—but the walls of the house, in which he wanders ruefully about, wide and wild as the wasteful skies.

"The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop,
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top."

These are the last sweet images of the receding human world, and for one day—and many more—happily sails the bark away into the main.

"The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea!
Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon."

In a few words, what a length of voyage! The ship is in another world—and we too are not only out of sight, but out of memory of land. The wedding-guest would fain join the music he yet hears—but he is fettered to the stone.

"The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads, before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The wedding-guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner."

We have a dim remembrance either of having read or written something to this effect—twenty years, or less, or more ago—that the actual surface-life of the world is here brought close into contact with the life of sentiment—the soul that is as much alive, and enjoys and suffers as much, in dreams and visions of the night as by daylight. One feels with what a heavy eye the Mariner must look and listen to the pomps—merry-makings—even to the innocent enjoyments—of those whose experience has only been of things tangible. One feels that to him another world—we do not mean a supernatural, but a more exquisitely and deeply natural world, has been revealed, and the repose of his spirit can only be in the contemplation of things that are not to pass away. The sad and solemn indifference of his mood is communicated to his hearer, and we feel, even after reading what he had heard, it were better "to turn from the bridegroom's door." But we are thinking now—as we were then—on the most mournful and pathetic close of the poem, whereas we began to speak of the beginning—and come ye with us on board, and drive southward in storm.

"And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roar'd the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:

> And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
> As green as emerald.
>
> And through the drifts the snowy clifts
> Did send a dismal sheen:
> Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
> The ice was all between.
>
> The ice was here, the ice was there,
> The ice was all around:
> It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd,
> Like noises in a swound!"

It has been said by the highest of all authorities—even Wordsworth himself—that in this wonderful poem, the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated—but we are glad not to feel that objection; and in due humility, we venture to say that it is not so. The Ancient Mariner had told his tale many a time and oft to auditors seized on all on a sudden, when going about their ordinary business, and certainly he never told it twice in the self-same words. Each oral edition was finer and finer than all the preceding editions, and the imagery in the polar winter of his imagination, kept perpetually agglomerating and piling itself up into a more and more magnificent multitude of strange shapes, like icebergs magnifying themselves by the waves frozen as they dash against the crystal walls.

Neither can we think, with our master, reverent follower and affectionate friend as we are, that it is a fault in the poem, that the Ancient Mariner is throughout passive—always worked upon, never at work. Were that a fault, it would indeed be a fatal one, for in that very passiveness—which is powerlessness—lies the whole meaning of the poem. He delivers himself up—or rather his own one wicked act has delivered him up, into the power of an unerring spirit, and he has no more will of his own, than the ship who is in the hands of the wind.

> "And some in dreams assured were
> Of the spirit that plagued us so;
> Nine fathoms deep he had followed us,
> From the land of mist and snow."

Death and Death-in-Life are dicers for his destiny, and he lies on deck—the stake. All he has to do is to suffer and to

endure; and even after his escape, when "the ship goes down like lead," he continues all life long a slave.

> "God save thee, Ancient Mariner,
> From the fiends that plague thee thus."

We remember the time when there was an outcry among the common critics, "What! all for shooting a bird!" We answered them then as now—but now they are all dead and buried, and blinder and deeper even than when alive—that no one who will submit himself to the magic that is around him, and suffer his senses and his imagination to be blended together, and exalted by the melody of the charmed words, and the splendour of the unnatural apparitions, with which the mysterious scene is opened, will experience any revulsion towards the very centre and spirit of this haunted dream—"I SHOT THE ALBATROSS." All the subsequent miseries of the crew, we then said, are represented as having been the consequence of this violation of the charities of sentiment; and these are the same miseries that were spoken of by the said critics, as being causeless and unmerited. There is, we now repeat, without the risk of wanting the sympathies of one single human being—man, woman, or child—the very essence of tenderness in the sorrowful delight with which the Ancient Mariner dwells upon the image of the pious bird of good omen, as it

> "Every day for food or play,
> Came to the Mariner's hollo!"

and the convulsive shudder with which he narrates the treacherous issue, bespeaks to us no more than the pangs that seem to have followed justly on that inhospitable crime. It seems as if the very spirit of the universe had been stunned by his wanton cruelty, as if earth, sea, and sky had all become dead and stagnant in the extinction of the moving breath of love and gentleness.

> "Water, water, everywhere,
> And all the boards did shrink;
> Water, water, everywhere,
> Nor any drop to drink.
>
> The very deep did rot: O Christ!
> That ever this should be!

Yes, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung."

The sufferings that ensue are painted with a power far transcending that of any other poet who has adventured on the horrors of thirst, inanition, and drop-by-drop wasting away of clay bodies into corpses. They have tried by luxuriating among images of misery to exhaust the subject—by accumulation of ghastly agonies—gathered from narratives of shipwrecked sailors, huddled on purpose into boats for weeks on sun-smitten seas—or of shipfuls of sinners crazed and delirious, staving liquor-casks, and in madness murdering and devouring one another, or with yelling laughter leaping into the sea. Coleridge concentrated into a few words the essence of torment —and showed soul made sense, and living but in baked dust and blood.

"With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all."

This is the true Tragedy of Remorse—and also of Repentance. Thirst had dried, and furred, and hardened his throat the same as the throats of the other wretches—but God had cracked too his stony heart, and out of it oozed some drops of blood that could be extorted but by its own moral misery. "I bit my arm, I sucked the blood," and why? Not to quench that thirst, but that he might call a sail! a sail! Remorse edged his teeth on his own flesh—Remorse mad for salvation of the wretches suffering for his sin; and in the act there was Repentance. But Remorse and Repentance, what are they to Doom? They neither change nor avert—and seeing themselves both baffled, again begin to ban and to curse, till there is a conversion; and out of perfect contrition arise, even in nature's extremest misery, resignation and peace.

* * * *

"Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gush'd,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracts of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware.
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea."

In reference to another senseless objection, we may be pardoned for saying, what all but idiots know, that the crime of one man involves in its punishment the death of hundreds and thousands—on shore and at sea—even in the ordinary course of nature—and while death is their doom, life is his, as in this strangest of all shadows of the wild ways of Providence.

Nor were the rest of the crew innocent, for they approved the deed—they suffer and die—and after death, the chief criminal beholds their beatified spirits; but he who in wantonness and madness killed the beautiful bird, that came out of the snow-cloud whiter than snow, and kept for days sailing along with the ship on wings whiter than ever were hers in the sunshine—he lives on—a heavier doom—and in his ceaseless trouble has but one consolation, and out of it the hope arises that enables him to dree his rueful penance—the Christian hope that his confession may soften other hearts in the hardness, or awaken them from the carelessness of cruelty, and thus be of avail for his own sake before the throne of justice and of mercy at the last day.

"O wedding-guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou wedding guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

TUPPER'S GERALDINE.

[DECEMBER 1838.]

Coleridge's *Christabel* is the most exquisite of all his inspirations; and, incomplete as it is, affects the imagination more magically than any other poem concerning the preternatural. We are all the while in our own real and living world, and in the heart of its best and most delightful affections. Yet trouble is brought among them from some region lying beyond our ken, and we are alarmed by the shadows of some strange calamity overhanging a life of beauty, piety, and peace. We resign all our thoughts and feelings to the power of the mystery—seek to enjoy rather than to solve it—and desire that it may be not lengthened but prolonged, so strong is the hold that superstitious Fear has of the human heart, entering it in the light of a startling beauty, while Evil shows itself in a shape of heaven; and in the shadows that Genius throws over it, we know not whether we be looking at Sin or Innocence, Guilt or Grief.

Coleridge *could* not complete *Christabel*. The idea of the poem, no doubt, dwelt always in his imagination—but the poet knew that power was not given him to robe it in words. The Written rose up between him and the Unwritten; and seeing that it was "beautiful exceedingly," his soul was satisfied, and shunned the labour—though a labour of love—of a new creation.

Therefore 'tis but a Fragment—and for the sake of all that is most wild and beautiful, let it remain so for ever. But we are forgetting ourselves; as many people as choose may publish what they call continuations and sequels of *Christabel* —but not one of them will be suffered to live. If beyond a month any one of them is observed struggling to protract its

rickety existence, it will assuredly be strangled, as we are about to strangle Mr Tupper's *Geraldine.*

Mr Tupper is a man of talent, and in his Preface writes, on the whole judiciously, of *Christabel.* "Every word tells—every line is a picture: simple, beautiful, and imaginative, it retains its hold upon the mind by so many delicate feelers and touching points, that to outline harshly the main branches of the tree, would seem to be doing the injustice of neglect to the elegance of its foliage, and the microscopic perfection of every single leaf. Those who now read it for the first time will scarcely be disposed to assent to so much praise; but the man to whom it is familiar will remember how it has grown to his own liking—how much of melody, depth, nature, and invention, he has found from time to time hiding in some simple phrase or unobtrusive epithet." In no poem can "every line be a picture;" and there is little or no meaning in what Mr Tupper says above about the tree; but our wonder is, how, with his feeling of the beauty of *Christabel*, he could have so blurred and marred it in his unfortunate sequel. "*My excuse*," he says, "for continuing the fragment at all, will be found in Coleridge's own words to the preface of the 1816 pamphlet edition, where he says, 'I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year'—*a half-promise which, I need scarcely observe, has never been redeemed.*" Mr Tupper continues: "In the following attempt I may be censured for rashness, or commended for courage; of course, I am fully aware, that to take up the pen where COLERIDGE has laid it down, and that in the wildest and most original of his poems, is a most difficult, nay, dangerous proceeding; but upon these very characteristics of difficulty and danger I humbly rely; trusting that, in all proper consideration for the boldness of the experiment, if I be adjudged to fail, the fall of Icarus may be broken; if I be accounted to succeed, the flight of Dædalus may apologise for his presumption." "Finally," he says, "I deem it due to myself to add, what I trust will not be turned against me, viz., that, if not written literally *currente calamo*, GERALDINE has been the pleasant labour of but a very few days.

Mr Tupper does not seem to know that *Christabel* "was continued" many years ago, in a style that perplexed the public and pleased even Coleridge. The ingenious writer

meant it for a mere *jeu de sprit*[1]; but *Geraldine* is dead serious, and her father hopes an immortal fame. We neither "censure him for rashness nor commend him for courage," but are surprised at his impertinence, and pained by his stupidity —and the more for that he possesses powers that, within their own proper province, may gain him reputation. We like him, and hope to praise him some day—nay, purpose to praise him this very day—therefore we shall punish him at present but with forty stripes. He need not fear a fall like that of Icarus, for his artificial wings have not lifted his body fairly off the ground—and so far from soaring through the sky like a Dædalus, he labours along the sod after the fashion of a Dodo. In the summer of 1797, Coleridge wrote the first part of *Christabel*—in 1800, the second—and published them in 1816—so perfected, that his genius, in its happiest hours, feared to look its own poem in the face, and left it for many long years, and at last, without an altered or an added word, to the delight of all ages. Mr Tupper's "*Geraldine* has been the pleasant labour of a very few days!"—(Loud cries of Oh! oh! oh!)

Mr Tupper in the Third Canto shows us the Lady Geraldine beneath the oak—the scene of the Witch's first meeting with Christabel. You remember the lines in Coleridge.[2] And how, when the Witch unbound her cincture,

> "Her silken robe and inner vest
> Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
> Behold! *her bosom and half her side,*
> *A sight to dream of, not to tell!*
> O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!"

These few words signify some unimaginable horror—and never did genius, not even Shakespeare's, so give to one of its creations, by dim revelation mysteriously diffused, a fearful being that all at once is present "beyond the reaches of our souls"—something fiendish in what is most fair, and blasting in what is most beautiful.

Powerful as Prospero was Coleridge; but what kind of a wand is waved by Mr Tupper?

> "Thickly curls a poisonous smoke,
> And terrible shapes with evil names

[1] See *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. v. p. 286. [2] Quoted *ante*, p. 330.

Are leaping around in a circle of flames,
And the tost air whirls, storm-driven,
And the rent earth quakes, charm-riven,—
And—*art thou not afraid?*"

Previous to these apparitions, the wolf has been hunting, the raven croaking, the owl screeching, the clock of course tolling twelve,

"And to her cauldron hath hurried the witch,
And aroused the deep bay of the mastiff bitch;"

The moon is gibbous, and looks "like an eyeball of sorrow," and yet is called "sun of the night,"—most perversely—and oh! how unlike the sure inspiration of Coleridge! While, with the "Sun of the Night" shining, Geraldine is absurdly said to be—

"Fair *truant*—like an angel of light,
Hiding from heaven in dark midnight."

One touch of the Poet's would have shown the scene in all the power of midnight, by such an accumulation of ineffective and contradictory imagery thus utterly destroyed. S. T. C. made the Witch dreadful—M. F. T. makes her disgusting.

"All dauntless stands the maid
In mystical robe array'd,
And still with flashing eyes
She dares the sorrowful skies,
And to the moon like one possest,
Hath shown—O dread! that face so fair
Should smile above so shrunk a breast,
Haggard and brown, as hangeth there—
O evil sight!—wrinkled and old,
The dug of a witch, and clammy cold,—
Where in warm beauty's rarest mould
Is fashioned all the rest."

. . . . . .

"Muttering wildly through her set teeth,
She seeketh and stirreth the demons beneath."

Why—were not already "terrible shapes with evil names leaping around a circle of flames?" But

"Now one nearer than others is heard
Flapping this way, as a huge sea-bird,
Or liker the dark-dwelling ravenous shark
Cleaving through the waters dark."

Of her or him we hear no more—and it is well—but who that ever saw a shark in the sea would say that his style of motion was like that of a huge sea-bird flapping its wings? Geraldine feels "the spell hath power," and

> "Her mouth grows wide, and her face falls in,
> And her beautiful brow becomes flat and thin,
> And sulphurous flashes blear and singe
> That sweetest of eyes with its delicate fringe,
> Till, all its loveliness blasted and dead,
> The eye of a snake blinks deep in her head;
> For raven locks flowing loose and long
> Bristles a red mane, stiff and strong,
> And sea-green scales are beginning to speck
> Her shrunken breasts, and lengthening neck;
> The white round arms are sunk in her sides,—
> As when in chrysalis canoe
> A may-fly down the river glides,
> Struggling for life and liberty too,—
> Her body convulsively twists and twirls,
> This way and that it bows and curls,
> And now her soft limbs melt into one
> Strangely and horribly tapering down,
> Till on the burnt grass dimly is seen
> A serpent-monster, scaly and green,
> Horror!—can this be Geraldine?"

You remember the dream of Bracy the Bard in *Christabel*—told by himself to Sir Leoline?

> "In my sleep I saw that dove,
> That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
> And call'st by thy own daughter's name—
> Sir Leoline! I saw the same
> Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan
> Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
> Which when I saw and when I heard,
> I wondered what might ail the bird;
> For nothing near it I could see,
> Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old Tree.
> And in my dream methought I went
> To search out what might there be found;
> And what the sweet bird's trouble meant
> That thus lay fluttering on the ground.

I went and heard, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry;
But yet for her dear Lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck,
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!
I woke; it was the midnight hour,
The clock was echoing in the tower;
But though my slumber was gone by,
This dream it would not pass away—
It seems to live upon my eye!
And thence I vowed this self-same day,
With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest lone,
Lest aught unholy loiter there."

How beautiful the picture! The expression how perfect! How full of meaning the dream! Mr Tupper does not know it was a dream of love in fear; and interpreting it literally, transforms Geraldine into a "bright green snake!" and such a snake!

The "dragon-maid" coils herself round the "old oak stump," splitting it to the heart, which, it seems, is hollow and black —and after a while

"The hour is fled, the spell hath sped;
And heavily dropping down as dead,
All in her own beauty drest,
Brightest, softest, loveliest,
Fair faint Geraldine lies on the ground,
Moaning sadly;
And forth from the oak
In a whirl of thick smoke
Grinning gladly,
Leaps with a hideous howl at a bound
A squat black dwarf of visage grim,
With crutches beside each twisted limb
Half hidden in many a flame-coloured rag,—
It is Ryxa the Hag!"

Ryxa the hag is the Witch's mother—by whom the deponent saith not—and undertakes to clothe her with all beauty—in the shape of Geraldine—that she may win the love of the Lady Christabel's betrothed knight, and enjoy his embraces—only that

> "Still thy bosom and half thy side
> Must shrivel and sink at eventide,
> And still, as every Sabbath breaks,
> Thy large dark eyes must blink as a snake's."

She tells her, too, to beware of the hymning of the Holy Bard—

> "For that the power of hymn and harp
> Thine innermost being shall wither and warp,
> And the same hour they touch thine ears,
> A serpent thou art for a thousand years."

Such is Canto Third, and it explains—as we understand it—what occurred immediately before the meeting of Christabel and the Witch beneath the oak, as described in the First Canto by Coleridge. But how the Dragon Maid was so beautiful before her mother endowed her with the borrowed mien of Geraldine, we do not know; nor are we let into the secret of the cause of her hatred of Christabel in particular, more than of any other lovely Christian lady with a Christian lover, of whom there must have been many at that day among the Lakes. The Canto seems to us throughout to the last degree absurd.

It pleased Coleridge to give to each of his two Cantos a conclusion, in a separate set of verses; and Mr Tupper does the same. But oh! what verses! He speaketh of hatred—or jealousy—or some infernal passion or another, which, among other evil works,

> "Floodeth the bosom with bitterest gall,
> It drowneth the young virtues all,
> And the sweet milk of the heart's own fountain,
> Choked and crushed by a heavy mountain,
> All curdled, and harden'd, and blacken'd, doth shrink
> Into the Sepia's stone-bound ink!!" &c.

Think of these lines as Coleridge's,

> "The creature of the God-like forehead!"

Part Fourth beginneth thus—

"The eye of day hath opened grey,
And the gallant sun
Hath trick'd his beams by Rydal's streams,
And waveless Coniston;
From Langdale Pikes his glory strikes,
From heath and giant hill,
From many a tairn, and *stone-built cairn*,
And many a mountain rill:
Helvellyn bares his forehead black,
And Eagle Crag, and Saddleback,
And Skiddaw hails the dawning day,
And rolls his robe of clouds away."

Mr Tupper knows nothing of the localities—and should have consulted Green's Guide before sitting down to "continue" *Christabel*. Coniston has no connection with Rydal's streams, nor have they any connection with Sir Leoline's Castle in Langdale—much less has Helvellyn—and least of all have Saddleback and Skiddaw. No doubt the "eye of day" saw them all, and many a place beside; but this slobbering sort of work is neither poetry nor painting—mere words.

A stranger knight with a noble retinue arrives at the Castle gate, and "leaps the moat,"—an unusual feat. And who is he? Amador, "a foundling youth," who having been exposed in infancy "beneath the tottering Bowther-stone," and picked up by Sir Leoline, in due course of time fell in love with Christabel, and, on discovery of their mutual affection, had been ordered by the wrathful Baron away to the Holy Land, not to return

"Till name and fame and fortune are his."

The progress of the loves of the "*handsome (!)* youth and the beauteous maid" is described circumstantially—and we are told that, when climbing the mountains together, they did not

"Guess that the strange joy they feel
The rapture making their hearts reel,
Springs from aught else than—sweet Grasmere,
Or hill and valley far and near,
Or Derwent's banks, and glassy tide,
Lowdore and hawthorn'd Ambleside."

Such simplicity is rare, even nowadays, in young people on whom "life's noon is blazing bright and fair." But so it was,

Mr Tupper assures us in lines that will bear comparison with anything of the kind in any language.

"Thus they grew up in each other,
Till to ripened youth
They had grown up for each other;
Yet, to say but sooth,
She had not loved him, as other
Than a sister doth,
And he to her was but a brother,
With a brother's troth:
But selfish craft, that slept so long,
And, if wrong were, had done the wrong,
Now, just awake, with dull surprise
Read the strange truth,
And from their own accusing eyes
Condemned them both,—
That they, who only for each other
Gladly drew their daily breath,
Now must curb, and check, and smother
Through all life, love strong as death;
While the dear hope they just have learnt to prize,
And fondly cherish,
The hope that in their hearts deep-rooted lies,
Must pine and perish:
For the slow prudence of the worldly wise
In cruel coldness still denies
The foundling youth to woo and win
The heiress daughter of Leoline."

To part them was as hard as to bid

"The broad oak stump, *as it stands on the farm*,
Be rent asunder by strength of arm;"

the wrench as severe as that needed

"To drag the magnet from the pole,
To chain the freedom of the soul,
To freeze in ice desires that boil,
To root the mandrake from the soil," &c.

But Amador, after ten years' absence—so Christabel was no girl—now returned "with name and fame and *fortune*"—for

"The Lion-King, with his own right hand,
Had dubbed him Knight of Holy Land,

The crescent waned where'er he came,
And Christendom rung with his fame,
And *Saladin trembled at the name*
Of Amador de Ramothaim!"

Having leapt the moat, and flung himself from his horse,

"In the hall
He met her!—but how pale and wan!—
He started back, as she upon
His neck would fall;
He started back,—for by her side
(O blessed vision!) he espied
A thing divine,—
Poor Christabel was lean and white,
But oh, how soft, and fair, and bright,
Was Geraldine!
Fairer and brighter as he gazes
All celestial beauty blazes
From those glorious eyes,
And Amador no more can brook
The jealous air and peevish look
That in the other lies!"

This is rather sudden, and takes the reader aback—for though poor Christabel had had a strange night of it, she was a lovely creature the day before, and could not have grown so very "*lean* and white" in so short a time. Only think of her looking "*peevish*"! But—

"A trampling of hoofs at the cullice-port,
A hundred horse in the castle court!
From border wastes a weary way,
Through Halegarth wood and Knorren moor,
A mingled numerous array,
On panting palfreys black and grey,
With foam and mud bespattered o'er,
Hastily cross'd the flooded Irt,
And rich Waswater's beauty skirt,
And Sparkling-Tairn, and rough Seathwaite,
And now that day is dropping late,
Have passed the drawbridge and the gate."

Here again Mr Tupper shows, somewhat ludicrously, his unacquaintance with the Lake-Land, and makes Sir Roland perform a most circuitous journey.

You know that Sir Leoline and Sir Roland had been friends in youth, and cannot have forgotten Coleridge's exquisite description of their quarrel and estrangement. He would have painted their reconciliation in a few lines of light. But attend to Tupper—and remember the parties are, each of them, bordering, by his account, on fourscore.

"Like aspens tall beside the brook,
The stalwarth warriors stood and shook,
And each advancing feared to look
Into the other's eye ;
'Tis fifty years ago to-day
Since in disdain and passion they
Had flung each other's love away
With words of insult high ;
How had they long'd and pray'd to meet!
But memories cling ; and pride is sweet ;
And—which could be the first to greet
The haply scornful other ?
What if De Vaux were haughty still,—
Or Leoline's unbridled will
Consented not his rankling ill
In charity to smother ?

Their knees give way, their faces are pale,
And loudly beneath the corslets of mail,
Their aged hearts in generous heat
Almost to bursting boil and beat ;
The white lips quiver, the pulses throb,
They stifle and swallow the rising sob,—
And there they stand, faint and unmann'd,
As each holds forth his bare right hand !
Yes, the mail-clad warriors tremble,
All unable to dissemble
Penitence and love confest,
As within each aching breast
The flood of affection grows deeper and stronger
Till they can refrain no longer,
But with,—'Oh, my long-lost brother !'
To their hearts they clasp each other,
Vowing in the face of heaven
All forgotten and forgiven !

Then the full luxury of grief
That brings the smothered soul relief,

Within them both so fiercely rushed
That from their vanquish'd eyes out-gushed
A tide of tears, as pure and deep
As children, yea as cherubs weep!"

Sir Roland tells Sir Leoline that his daughter Geraldine could not help being amused with Bard Bracy's tale that she was in Langdale, seeing that she was sitting at home in her own latticed bower; but the false one imposes on the old gentleman with a pleasant story, and, manifest impostor and liar though she be, they take her—do not start from your chair—*for the Virgin Mary!*

"Her beauty hath conquer'd: a sunny smile
Laughs into goodness her seeming guile.
Ay, was she not in mercy sent
To heal the friendships pride had rent?
Is she not here a blessed saint
To work all good by subtle feint?
Yea, art thou not, mysterious dame,
Our Lady of Furness?—the same, the same!
O holy one, we know thee now,
O gracious one, before thee bow,
Help us, Mary, hallowed one,
Bless us for thy wondrous Son"—

At that word, the spell is half-broken, and the dotards, who had been kneeling, rise up; the Witch gives a slight hiss, but instantly recovers her gentleness and her beauty, and both fall in love with her, like the elders with Susanna.

"Wonder-stricken were they then,
And full of love, those ancient men,
Full-fired with guilty love, as when
In times of old
To young Susanna's fairness knelt
Those elders twain, and foully felt
The lava-streams of passion melt
Their bosoms cold."

They walk off as jealous as March hares, and Amador, a more fitting wooer, supplies their place.

"His head is cushioned on her breast,
Her dark eyes shed love on his,
And his changing cheek is prest
By her hot and thrilling kiss,

> While again from her moist lips
> The honey-dew of joy he sips,
> And views, with rising transport warm,
> Her half-unveiled bewitching form."

At this critical juncture Christabel comes gliding ghostlike up to him—and Amador, most unaccountably stung—

> ——"Stung with remorse,
> Hath dropt at her feet as a clay-cold corse;"

she raises him up and kisses him—Geraldine, with "an involuntary hiss and snake-like stare," gnashes her teeth on the loving pair. Bard Bracy plays on his triple-stringed Welsh harp a holy hymn—Geraldine is convulsed, grows lank and lean—

> "The spell is dead—the charm is o'er,
> Writhing and circling on the floor,
> While she curl'd in pain, and then was seen no more."

Next day at noon Amador and Christabel are wed—the spirit of the bride's mother descending from heaven to bless the nuptials—the bridegroom is declared by her to be Sir Roland's son—

> "The spirit said, and all in light
> Melted away that vision bright;
> My tale is told."

Such is *Geraldine*, a Sequel to Coleridge's *Christabel!* It is, indeed, a most shocking likeness—call it rather a horrid caricature. Coleridge's Christabel, in any circumstances beneath the sun, moon, and stars, "lean and white, and peevish"!! —a most impious libel. Coleridge's Geraldine "like a lady from a far countree"—with that dreadful bosom and side-stain still the most beautiful of all the witches—and in her mysterious wickedness powerful by the inscrutable secret of some demon-spell over the best of human innocence—the dragon-daughter of an old red-ragged hag, hobbling on wooden crutches! *Where is our own?* Coleridge's bold English Barons, stiff in their green eld as oaks, Sir Leoline and Sir Roland, with rheumy eyes, slavering lips, and tottering knees, shamelessly wooing the same witch in each other's presence, with all the impotence of the last stage of dotage!

"She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away!"

That is all we hear of him from Coleridge—Mr Tupper brings before us the "*handsome youth*" (yes! he calls him so), with

"a goodly shield,
Three wild-boars or, on an azure field,
While scallop-shells on an argent fess
Proclaim him a pilgrim and knight *no less!!*
Enchased in gold on his helmet of steel
A deer-hound stands on the high-plumed *keel!*" &c.

And thus equipped—booted and spurred—armed cap-à-pie, he leaps the moat—contrary to all the courtesies of chivalry—and, rushing up to the lady who had been praying for him for *ten years* (ten is too many), he turns on his heel as if he had stumbled by mistake on an elderly vinegar-visaged chambermaid, and makes furious love before her face to the lady on whose arm she is fainting;—and *this* is in the spirit of—Coleridge! It won't do to say Amador is under a spell. No such spell can be tolerated—and so far from being moved with pity for Amador as infatuated, we feel assured that there is not one Quaker in Kendal, who, on witnessing such brutality, would not lend a foot to kick him down stairs, and a hand to fling him into the moat among the barbels.

As for the diction, it is equally destitute of grace and power—and not only without any colouring of beauty, but all blotch and varnish, laid on as with a shoe-brush. All sorts of images and figures of speech crawl over the surface of the Sequel, each shifting for itself, like certain animalculæ set a-racing on a hot plate by a flaxen-headed cowboy; and though there are some hundreds of them, not one is the property of Mr Tupper, but liable to be claimed by every versifier from Cockaigne to Cape Wrath.

Let us turn, then, to his ambitious and elaborate address to Imagination, and see if it conspicuously exhibit the qualities of the poetical character.

"Thou fair enchantress of my willing heart,
Who charmest it to deep and dreamy slumber,
Gilding mine evening clouds of reverie,—

Thou lovely Siren, who, with still small voice
Most softly musical, dost lure me on
O'er the wide sea of indistinct idea,
Or quaking sands of untried theory,
Or ridgy shoals of fixt experiment
That wind a dubious pathway through the deep,—
Imagination, I am thine own child:
Have I not often sat with thee retired,
Alone, yet not alone, though grave most glad,
All silent outwardly, but loud within,
As from the distant hum of many waters,
Weaving the tissue of some delicate thought,
And hushing every breath that might have rent
Our web of gossamer, so finely spun?
Have I not often listed thy sweet song
(While in vague echoes and Æolian notes
The chambers of my heart have answered it),
With eye as bright in joy, and fluttering pulse,
As the coy village maiden's when her lover
Whispers his hope to her delighted ear?"

Imagination is here hailed first as a "fair enchantress," then as a "lovely siren," and then as the poet's mother—"I am thine own child." In the next paragraph—not quoted—she is called "angelic visitant;" again he says, "me thy son;" immediately after, "indulgent lover, I am all thine own;" and then—

"Imagination, art thou *not my friend*,
In crowds and solitude, *my comrade dear*,
Brother and sister, mine own other self,
The Hector to my soul's Andromache?"

These last lines are prodigious nonsense; and we could not have believed it possible so to burlesque the most touching passage in all Homer. Nor can we help thinking the image of Martin Farquhar Tupper, Esq., M.A., author of "Proverbial Philosophy"—

"With eye as bright in joy, and fluttering pulse,
As the coy village maiden's"—

rather ridiculous—with Imagination sitting by his side, and whispering soft nothings into his ear.

"With still small voice" is too hallowed an expression to

be properly applied to a "lovely siren;" nor is it the part of a siren to lure poets on

> "O'er the wide sea of indistinct idea,
> Or quaking sands of untried theory,
> Or ridgy shoals of fixt experiment,
> That wind a dubious pathway through the deep."

We do not believe that these lines have any real meaning; and then they were manifestly suggested by two mighty ones of Wordsworth—

> "The intellectual power through words and things
> Went sounding on its dim and perilous way."

Imagination is then "Triumphant Beauty, bright Intelligence," and

> "The chastened fire of ecstasy suppressed
> Beams from her eye,"

which is all true; but why thus beams her eye?

> "Because thy secret heart,
> *Like that strange light, burning yet unconsumed,*
> Is all on flame, a censer filled with odours,
> And to my mind, who feel thy fearful power,
> Suggesting passive terrors and delights,
> A slumbering volcano," &c.

Here the heart of Imagination is—if we rightly understand it—the burning bush spoken of in the Old Testament—a censer filled with odours—and a slumbering volcano! That is not poetry. But here comes to us an astounding personification—which we leave, without criticism, to be admired—if you choose.

> "Thy dark cheek,
> Warm and transparent, by its half-formed dimple
> Reveals an under-world of wondrous things
> Ripe in their richness,—as among the bays
> Of blest Bermuda, through the sapphire deep,
> Ruddy and white, fantastically branch
> The coral groves: thy broad and sunny brow,
> Made fertile by the genial smile of heaven,
> Shoots up an hundred-fold the glorious crop
> Of arabesque ideas; forth from thy curls
> Half hidden in their black luxuriance

The twining sister-graces lightly spring,
The Muses, and the Passions, and Young Love,
Tritons and Naiads, Pegasus, and Sphinx,
Atlas, Briareus, Phæton, and Cyclops,
Centaurs, and shapes uncouth, and wild conceits:
And in the midst blazes the star of mind,
Illumining the classic portico
That leads to the high dome where Learning sits:
On either side of that broad sunny brow
Flame-coloured pinions, streaked with gold and blue,
Burst from the teaming brain; while under them
The forked lightning, and the cloud-robed thunder,
And fearful shadows, and unhallowed eyes,
And strange foreboding forms of terrible things
Lurk in the midnight of thy raven locks."

Here and there we meet with a rather goodish line—as for example—

"Thou hast wreathed me smiles,
And hung them on a statue's marble lips."

And again—

"Hast made earth's dullest pebbles bright like gems."

And still better, perhaps—

"Hast lengthened out my nights with life-long dreams."

We are willing, but scarcely able, to be pleased with the following image:

"First feelings, and young hopes, and better aims,
And sensibilities of delicate sort,
Like timorous mimosas, which the breath,
The cold and cautious breath of daily life,
Hath not, as yet, had power to blight or kill,
From my heart's garden; for they stood retired,
Screened from the north by groves of rooted thoughts."

You admire it?—then probably you will admire this too—

"So, too, the memory of departed joy,
Walking in black with sprinkled tears of pearl,
Passes before the mind with look less stern,
And foot more lightened, when thine inward power,
Most gentle friend, upon the clouded face
Sheds the fair light of better joy to come,
And throws round Grief the azure scarf of Hope."

How far better had that thought been, if expressed in simplest language, and without any figure at all!

The Invocation ends thus,—

> "As the wild chamois bounds from rock to rock,
> Oft on the granite steeples nicely poised,
> Unconscious that the cliff from which he hangs
> Was once a fiery sea of molten stone,
> Shot up ten thousand feet and crystallised
> When earth was labouring with her kraken brood;
> So have I sped with thee, my bright-eyed love,
> Imagination, over pathless wilds,
> Bounding from thought to thought, unmindful of
> The fever of my soul that shot them up
> And made a ready footing for my speed,
> As like the whirlwind I have flown along
> Winged with ecstatic mind, and carried away,
> Like Ganymede of old, o'er cloud-capt Ida,
> Or Alps, or Andes, or the ice-bound shores
> Of Arctic or Antarctic,—stolen from earth
> Her sister-planets and the twinkling eyes
> That watch her from afar, to the pure seat
> Of rarest Matter's last created world,
> And brilliant halls of self-existing Light."

We call that bad. Like a chamois—like a whirlwind—like Ganymede! Show us a flight—without telling us what it is like—and leave us to judge for ourselves whether or no you are a poet and can fly.

Does Imagination inspire "The Song of an Alpine Elf?" The Alpine Elf sings—

> "My summer's home is the cataract's foam,
> As it floats in a frothing heap;
> My winter's rest is the weasel's nest,
> Or deep with the mole I sleep."

We daresay there are moles and weasels among the Alps, but one does not think of them there; and had Mr Tupper ever taken up a weasel by the tail, between his finger and thumb, he would not, we are persuaded, have conceived it possible that any Elf, accustomed to live during summer in the froth of a cataract, could have been "so far left to himself" as to have sought winter lodgings with an animal of such an intolerable stink. And what are the Alpine Elf's pursuits?

"I ride for a freak on the lightning streak,
And mingle among the cloud,
My swarthy form with the thunderstorm,
Wrapp'd in its sable shroud."

A very small thunderstorm indeed would suffice to wrap his Elfship in its sable shroud; but is he not too magniloquent for a chum of the mole and the weasel? What would be the astonishment of the mole to see his bed-fellow as follows—

"Often I launch the huge avalanche,
And make it my milk-white sledge,
When unappall'd to the Grindelwald
I slide from the Shrikehorn's edge."

By his own account he cannot be much more than a span long—and we are sceptical as to his ability to launch an avalanche, though we are aware that avalanches hold their places by a precarious tenure. However, the sight of so minute a gentleman sliding unappalled on a huge avalanche from the Grindelwald to the Shrikehorn's edge, would be of itself worthy a journey to Switzerland. But what a cruel little wretch it is! not satisfied with pushing the ibex over the precipice, he does not scruple to avow,

"That my greatest joy is to lure and decoy
To the chasm's slippery brink,
The hunter bold, *when he's weary and old*,
And there let him suddenly sink
A thousand feet—dead!—he dropped like lead,
Ha! he couldn't leap like me;
With broken back, as a felon on the rack,
He hangs on a split pine-tree."

Why shove only the old hunter over the chasm? 'Twould be far better sport, one would think, to an Alpine elf, to precipitate the young bridegroom. "Ha! he couldn't leap like me," is a fine touch of egotism and insult—and how natural!

"And there 'mid his bones, that echoed with groans,
I make me a nest of his hair;
The ribs dry and white rattle loud as in spite,
When I rock in my cradle there:
Hurrah, hurrah, and ha, ha, ha!
I'm in a merry mood,
For I'm all alone in my palace of bone,
That's tapestried fair with the old man's hair,
And dappled with clots of blood."

At what season of the year? During summer his home is in a "frothing heap;" during winter he sleeps with the weasel or moudiwarp. It must be in spring or autumn that he makes his nest in a dead man's hair. How *imaginative!*

Turn we now to a reality, and see how Mr Tupper, who likened himself to a chamois, deals with a chamois-hunter. He describes one scaling "Catton's battlement" before the peep of day, and now at its summit.

"Over the top, as he knew well,
Beyond the glacier in the dell
A herd of chamois slept;
So down the other dreary side,
With cautious step, or careless slide,
He bounded, or he crept."

And now he scans the chasm'd ice;
He stoops to leap, and in a trice
His foot hath slipp'd,—O heaven!
He hath leapt in, and down he falls
Between those blue tremendous walls,
Standing asunder riven.

But quick his clutching nervous grasp
Contrives a jutting crag to clasp,
And thus he hangs in air;—
O moment of exulting bliss!
Yet hope so nearly hopeless is
Twin-brother to despair.

He look'd beneath,—a horrible doom!
Some thousand yards of deepening gloom,
Where he must drop to die!
He look'd above, and many a rood
Upright the frozen ramparts stood
Around a speck of sky.

Fifteen long dreadful hours he hung,
And often by strong breezes swung
His fainting body twists,
Scarce can he cling one moment more,
His half-dead hands are ice, and sore
His burning bursting wrists.

His head grows dizzy,—he must drop,
He half resolves,—but stop, O stop,
Hold on to the last spasm,

Never in life give up your hope,—
Behold, behold a friendly rope
Is dropping down the chasm!

They call thee, Pierre,—see, see them here,
Thy gathered neighbours far and near,
Be cool, man, hold on fast:
And so from out that terrible place,
With death's pale paint upon his face,
They drew him up at last.

And he came home an altered man,
For many harrowing terrors ran
Through his poor heart that day;
He thought how all through life, though young,
Upon a thread, a hair, he hung,
Over a gulf midway:

He thought what fear it were to fall
Into the pit that swallows all,
Unwing'd with hope and love;
And when the succour came at last,
O then he learnt how firm and fast
Was his best Friend above."

That is much better than anything yet quoted, and cannot be read without a certain painful interest. But the composition is very poor.

"O heaven!
He hath leapt in!"

Well—what then? "and down he falls!" Indeed! We do not object to "between those blue tremendous walls," but why tell us they were "standing asunder riven?" We knew he had been on the edge of the "chasm'd ice." "O moment of exulting bliss!" No—no—no. "Many a rood"—perpendicular altitude is never measured by roods, nor yet by perches. Satan "lay floating many a rood"—but no mention of roods when "his stature reached the sky." "His head grows dizzy"—ay that it did long before the fifteen hours had expired. "But stop, O stop" is, we fear, laughable—yet we do not laugh—for 'tis no laughing matter—and "*never in life* give up your hope" is at so very particular a juncture too general an injunction. "*Be cool, man*, hold on fast" is a *leetle* too much, addressed to poor Pierre, whose "half dead

hands were ice," and who had been hanging on by them for fifteen hours.

> " And so from out that terrible place,
> *With death's pale paint upon his face,*
> They drew him up at last"—

is either very good or very bad—and we refer it to Wordsworth. The concluding stanzas are tame in the extreme,

> " For many harrowing terrors ran
> Through his poor heart that day!"

We can easily believe it; but never after such a rescue was there so feeble an expression from poet's heart of religious gratitude in the soul of a sinner saved.

The " African Desert " and " The Suttees " look like Oxford Unprized Poems. The Caravan, after suffering the deceit of the mirage, adust are aware of a well.

> " Hope smiles again, as with instinctive haste
> The panting camels rush along the waste,
> And snuff the grateful breeze, that sweeping by
> Wafts its cool fragrance through the cloudless sky.
> Swift as the steed that feels the slacken'd rein
> And flies impetuous o'er the sounding plain,
> Eager as, bursting from an Alpine source,
> The winter torrent in its headlong course,
> Still hasting on, the wearied band behold
> —The green oase, an emerald couch'd in gold!
> And now the curving rivulet they descry,
> That bow of hope upon a stormy sky,
> Now ranging its luxuriant banks of green
> In silent rapture gaze upon the scene:
> His graceful arms the palm was waving there
> Caught in the tall acacia's tangled hair,
> While in festoons across his branches slung
> The gay kossom its scarlet tassels hung;
> The flowering colocynth had studded round
> Jewels of promise o'er the joyful ground,
> And where the smile of day burst on the stream,
> The trembling waters glitter'd in the beam."

There is no thirst here—our palate grows not dry as we read. What *passion* is there in saying that the camels rushed along the waste,

> "Swift as the steed that feels the slacken'd rein,
> And flies impetuous o'er the sounding plain?"

"Not a bit." And still worse is

> "Eager as bursting from an Alpine source
> The winter torrent in its headlong course;

for there should have been no allusion to water anywhere else *but there;* the groan and the cry was for *water* to *drink;* and had Mr Tupper *felt* for the caravan, men and beasts, no other water would have been seen in his imagination—it would have been *impossible* for him to have thought of likening the cavalcade to Alpine sources and winter torrents—he would have huddled it all headlong, prone, or on its hands, hoofs, and knees, into the water of salvation. "The green oase, *an emerald couch'd in gold!!*" Water! Water! Water! and there it is!

> "That bow of hope upon a stormy sky!!!"

They are on its banks—and

> "In silent rapture gaze upon the scene!!!"

And then he absolutely paints it! not in water colours—but in chalks. Graceful arms of palms—tangled hair of acacia—scarlet tassels of kossoms in festoons—and the jewels of promise of the flowering colocynth!!!

Stammering or stuttering certainly is an unpleasant defect—or weakness in the power of articulation or speech, and we don't believe that Dr Browster could much mend it; but some of the most agreeable men we know labour under it, and we suspect owe to it no inconsiderable part of their power in conversation. People listen to their impeded prosing more courteously, and more attentively, than to the prate of those "whose sweet course is not hindered;" and thus encouraged, they grow more and more loquacious in their vivacity, till they fairly take the lead in argument or anecdote, and are the delight and instruction of the evening, as it may hap, in literature, philosophy, or politics. Then, a scandalous story, stuttered or stammered, is irresistible—every point tells—and blunt indeed, as the head of a pin, must be that repartee that extricates not itself with a jerk from the tongue-tied, sharp as the point of a needle.

We beg to assure Mr Tupper that his sympathy with the "Stammerer" would extort from the lips of the most suave of that fortunate class, who, it must be allowed, are occasionally rather irritable, characteristic expressions of contempt; and that so far from thinking their peculiarity any impediment, except merely in speech, they pride themselves, as well as they may, from experience, on the advantage it gives them in a colloquy, over the glib. If to carry its point at last be the end of eloquence, they are not only the most eloquent, but the only eloquent of men. No stammerer was ever beaten in argument—his opponents always are glad to give in—and often, after they have given in, and suppose their submission has been accepted, they find the contrary of all that from a dig on the side, that drives the breath out of their body, and keeps them speechless for the rest of the night, while the stream of conversation, if it may be called so, keeps issuing in jets and jerks, from the same inexhaustible source, pausing but to become more potent, and delivering, per hour, we fear to say how many imperial gallons into the reservoir.

Therefore we cannot but smile at "the Stammerer's Complaint"—as put into his lips by Mr Tupper. He is made to ask us—

> "Hast ever seen an eagle chain'd to earth?
> A restless panther to his cage immured?
> A swift trout by the wily fisher check'd?
> A wild bird hopeless strain its broken wing?"

We have; but what are all such sights to the purpose? An eagle chained cannot fly an inch—a panther in a cage can prowl none—a trout "checked"—basketed we presume—is as good as gutted—a bird winged is already dished—but a stammerer, "still beginning, never ending," is in all his glory when he meets a consonant whom he will not relinquish till he has conquered him, and dragged him in captivity at the wheels of his chariot,

> "While the swift axles kindle as they roll."

Mr Tupper's Stammerer then is made to say,

> "Hast ever felt, at the dark dead of night,
> Some undefined and horrid incubus
> Press down the very soul,—and paralyse
> The limbs in their imaginary flight
> From shadowy terrors in unhallowed sleep?"

We have; but what is all that to the purpose, unless it be to dissuade us from supping on pork-chop? Such oppression on the stomach, and through it on all the vital powers, is the effect of indigestion, and it is horrible; but the Stammerer undergoes no such rending of soul from body, in striving to give vent to his peculiar utterance—not he indeed—'tis all confined to his organs of speech—his agonies are apparent, not real—and he is conscious but of an enlivening emphasis that, while all around him are drowsy, keeps him wide awake, and banishes Sleep to his native land of Nod. We ourselves have what is called an impediment in our speech—and do "make wry faces," but we never thought of exclaiming to ourselves,

> "Then thou canst picture—ay, in sober truth,
> In real, unexaggerated truth,—
> The constant, galling, festering chain that binds
> Captive my mute interpreter of thought;
> The seal of lead enstamp'd upon my lips,
> The load of iron on my labouring chest,
> The mocking demon, that at every step
> Haunts me,—and spurs me on—*to burst in silence.*"

Heaven preserve us! is the world so ill off for woes—are they so scant—that a Poet who indites blank verse to Imagination, can dream of none worthier his lamentations than the occasional and not unfrequent inconveniences that a gifted spirit experiences from a lack of fluency of words?

> "I scarce would wonder, if a godless man
> (I name not him whose hope is heavenward),
> A man whom lying vanities hath scath'd
> And harden'd from all fear,—if such an one
> By this tyrannical Argus goaded on,
> Were to be wearied of his very life,
> And daily, hourly foiled in social converse,
> By the slow simmering of disappointment,
> Become a sour'd and apathetic being,
> Were to feel rapture at the approach of death,
> And long for his dark hope,—annihilation."

What if he were *dumb?*

Mr Tupper is a father, and some of his domestic verses are very pleasing — such as his sonnet to little Ellen, and his sonnet to little Mary; but we prefer the stanzas entitled

"Children," and quote them as an agreeable sample, premising that they would not have been the worse of some little tincture of imaginative feeling; for, expressive as they are of mere natural emotion, they cannot well be said to be poetry. We object, too, to the sentiment of the close, for thousands of childless men are rich in the enjoyment of life's best affections; and some of the happiest couples and the best we have ever known, are among those from whom God has witheld the gift of offspring. Let all good Christian people be thankful for the mercies graciously vouchsafed to them; but beware of judging the lot of others by their own, and of seeking to confine either worth, happiness, or virtue, within one sphere of domestic life, however blessed they may feel it to be;

"For the blue sky bends over all,"

and our fate here below is not determined by the stars.

CHILDREN.

"Harmless, happy little treasures,
Full of truth, and trust, and mirth,
Richest wealth, and purest treasures,
In this mean and guilty earth.

How I love you, pretty creatures,
Lamb-like flock of little things,
Where the love that lights your features
From the heart in beauty springs.

On these laughing rosy faces
There are no deep lines of sin,
None of passion's dreary traces
That betray the wounds within;

But yours is the sunny dimple
Radiant with untutor'd smiles,
Yours the heart, sincere and simple,
Innocent of selfish wiles;

Yours the natural curling tresses,
Prattling tongues, and shyness coy,
Tottering steps, and kind caresses,
Pure with health and warm with joy.

The dull slaves of gain, or passion,
Cannot love you as they should,
The poor worldly fools of fashion
Would not love you if they could:

Write them childless, those cold-hearted,
Who can scorn Thy generous boon,
And whose souls with fear have smarted,
Lest—Thy blessings come too soon.

While he hath a child to love him,
No man can be poor indeed;
While he trusts a Friend above him,
None can sorrow, fear, or need.

But for thee, whose hearth is lonely
And unwarm'd by children's mirth,
Spite of riches, thou art only
Desolate and poor on earth:

All unkiss'd by innocent beauty,
All unloved by guileless heart,
All uncheer'd by sweetest duty,
Childless man, how poor thou art!"

We like the following lines still better; and considered "as one of the moods of his own mind," they may be read with unmingled pleasure.

WISDOM'S WISH.

"Ah, might I but escape to some sweet spot,
Oasis of my hopes, to fancy dear,
Where rural virtues are not yet forgot,
And good old customs crown the circling year;
Where still contented peasants love their lot,
And trade's vile din offends not nature's ear,
But hospitable hearths, and welcomes warm
To country quiet add their social charm;

Some smiling bay of Cambria's happy shore,
A wooded dingle on a mountain-side,
Within the distant sound of ocean's roar,
And looking down on valley fair and wide,
Nigh to the village church, to please me more
Than vast Cathedrals in their Gothic pride,
And blest with pious pastor, who has trode
Himself the way, and leads his flock to God;

There would I dwell, for I delight therein!
Far from the evil ways of evil men,
Untainted by the soil of others' sin,
My own repented of, and clean again:

With health and plenty crown'd, and peace within,
Choice books, and guiltless pleasures of the pen,
And mountain-rambles with a welcome friend,
And dear domestic joys, that never end.

There, from the flowery mead, or shingled shore,
To cull the gems that bounteous nature gave,
From the rent mountain pick the brilliant ore,
Or seek the curious crystal in its cave;
And learning nature's Master to adore,
Know more of Him who came the lost to save;
Drink deep the pleasures contemplation gives,
And learn to love the meanest thing that lives.

No envious wish my fellows to excel,
No sordid money-getting cares be mine;
No low ambition in high state to dwell,
Nor meanly grand among the poor to shine:
But, sweet benevolence, regale me well
With those cheap pleasures and light cares of thine,
And meek-eyed piety, be always near,
With calm content, and gratitude sincere.

Rescued from cities, and forensic strife,
And walking well with God in nature's eye,
Blest with fair children, and a faithful wife,
Love at my board, and friendship dwelling nigh,
Oh thus to wear away my useful life,
And, when I'm called in rapturous hope to die,
Thus to rob heaven of all the good I can,
And challenge earth to show a happier man!"

But the best set of stanzas in the volume are those entitled "Ellen Gray." The subject is distressing, and has been treated so often—perhaps too often—as to be now exhausted—or if not so, nothing new can be expected on it, except either from original genius, or from a spirit made creative by profoundest sympathy and sorrow for the last extremities of human misery.

We do not think the idea very happy of "Contrasted Sonnets"—such as, Nature—Art; The Happy Home—The Wretched Home; Theory — Practice; Riches — Poverty; Philanthropic—Misanthropic; Country—Town, and so on; and 'tis an ancient, nay, a stale idea, though Mr Tupper evidently thinks it fresh and new, and luxuriates in it as if it were all his own. Sometimes he chooses to show that he is

ambidexter—and how much may be said on both sides—leaving the reader's mind in a state of indifference to what may really be the truth of the matter—or disposed to believe that he knows more about it than the Sonnetteer. The best are "Prose" and "Poetry"—and they are very good—so is "Ancient," but "Modern" is very bad.

Mr Tupper has received much praise from critics whose judgment is generally entitled to great respect—in the *Atlas*, if we mistake not—in the *Spectator*—and in the *Sun*. If our censure be undeserved—let our copious quotations justify themselves, and be our condemnation. Our praise may seem cold and scanty; but so far from despising Mr Tupper's talents, we have good hopes of him, and do not fear but that he will produce many far better things than the best of those we have selected for the approbation of the public. Perhaps our rough notes may help him to discover where his strength lies; and, with his right feelings, and amiable sensibilities, and fine enthusiasm, and healthy powers when exercised on familiar and domestic themes, so dear for ever to the human heart, there seems no reason why, in good time, he may not be among our especial favourites, and one of "the Swans of Thames"—which, we believe, are as big and as bright as those of the Tweed.

DE BERENGER'S HELPS AND HINTS.[1]

[SEPTEMBER 1835.]

THE Baron, in a series of letters to his son Augustus, desires to instruct him "how to become an overmatch for anybody who, in any shape, may aim, either at his life, his purse, or other property, or at unfair impediments to his justifiable pursuits, or at the disturbance of his peace of mind in any way, or of his enjoyments generally." He disclaims all rivalry with Lord Chesterfield, whose chief aim was to give his son the ostentatious accomplishments of a fine gentleman. Such accomplishments the Colonel is far from despising, but he rightly prefers to them all "unsophisticated ideas of honour." Neither does he seek to make his Augustus a disciple of the Tom and Jerry school, a thoroughbred Pickle, or a knowing varmint. But, "just as a merchant possessed of superior knowledge may be deemed richer than a more opulent rival, whose information is contracted, so, by the cool and judicious, as well as adroit application of even inferior physical powers, shall you be taught and enabled to subdue even gigantic, but ignorant opponents." And the worthy Baron says, "I will exert my best endeavours to show you how you can effect all this, yet without adopting any but fair and honourable means." It is long since we have read a more amusing and instructive series of letters, and we recommend the volume to the study of the youth of Great Britain and Ireland before they make a visit to the metropolis. Our article must be a short one, but we shall return to the consideration of some of the most interesting subjects treated of in the *Helps and Hints*, and for the present confine ourselves to the precautions which are necessary in walking the streets of great cities—the general rules and cautions to be observed on the highways and

[1] *Helps and Hints how to Protect Life and Property, &c.* By LIEUT.-COL. BARON DE BERENGER.

roads — and the best modes of defending yourself against the attacks which may be made on you in either of those situations.

"Never," saith the experienced Baron, "walk with your hands in your pockets." If you do, the thieves will take you for a flat, "that is, a weak-minded person, and likely to be operated upon successfully." Let there be nothing absurd in your dress, for by the outward pickpockets judge the inward man. On one occasion, the Colonel himself, when looking into the window of a print-shop, felt a tug, "and nimbly catching a young man's hand in my pocket, I forcibly retained it there, he begging all the while to be forgiven, and in very strenuous but submissive terms. Foolishly, being rather what is called upon good terms with myself, I somewhat pompously demanded to know what he could possibly see in *my* face to warrant his hopes of taking advantage of *my* folly. Hesitating a little, he replied, 'If you will but forgive me, sir, I will candidly tell you, and it may save you loss hereafter. Why, as to your face, sir, it is well enough, but your wearing pumps and silk stockings on a rainy day, and in such muddy streets, made me make sure of having met in you with a good flat.'"

Instead of *allowing* your tailor to make outside pockets to your morning frocks or coats, *order him*, quoth the Baron, somewhat imperiously, to place them inside. Our tailor has done so with the only morning frock or coat we have, and the consequence of such an arrangement or disposition of the parts is, that we are unable to pick our own pocket. That our snuff-box is there we know and feel, as it keeps bobbing against the calf of our leg, but to get anything near it with our hand has always hitherto baffled our utmost dexterity. We have to take off our patent safety, previous to every pinch, lay it across our knees, and after much manipulation, contrive to extricate Horn Tooke from the *cul-de-sac*. "Nevertheless, you must not rely upon being secure even then; for pickpockets are as crafty as they are nimble;" yet we cannot but think it a little hard that every hand should seem to know the way into those pockets but our own. The only true ephemeral is your beautiful white blue-spotted silk handkerchief!

"Avoid," saith the Baron, "every unnecessary display of money, since no solid excuse can be offered for so dangerous an act of carelessness or so pitiful a gratification of vanity. This practice is but

too common with persons of weak intellects or with perfect novices; and if, instead of being the result of thoughtlessness, their aim is to impress others with an idea of their consequence, it counteracts the very effect they endeavour to promote; for just as every thinking observer concludes that the being the owner of a horse, or the master of a servant, must be something quite new with a person who more frequently than others introduces 'my horse' or 'my servant' into his conversation, so to him it cannot fail to become a confirmation that the possession of large sums must either be unusual or of recent date with persons who so sillily can expose themselves to additional risks by thus inviting and provoking the ingenuity of sharpers and thieves of every description. Numerous, frightfully numerous, are the instances of murders committed in Great Britain and abroad under no instigation but that caused by the inconsiderate display of much cash, or of the boast of possessing it; for which reason it is more prudent to keep even your own servants in ignorance upon such points than to caution them against divulging, since mere innocent swagger on their part, or intoxication, may produce calamities—results that may throw whole families into mourning and consternation."

Have all your wits about you on leaving the bank, banking-houses, army and navy agencies, or similar places where you have been receiving money. Come out with a rueful countenance, as if you had found that you had long ago overdrawn your account. Dividend-hunters will see written on your face "No effects." Slip into a coach with a suicidal air, and tell Jehu to drive to the Stairs, as if in desperation you wished the public to know that your only friend on earth now was the Thames.

"Never pull out your watch to satisfy any inquirer. Tell him the time by guess," says the benevolent Baron, "continuing your walk all the while." To all questions about the road or any street, or name of any resident, without slackening your pace give a brief answer, expressive of total ignorance of that particular part of the world. Allow no man to put any letter or parcel into your hand with a request that you will have the kindness to explain the address.

A still more useful advice to young, and likewise to elderly gentlemen, we give in the Baron's own forcible words.

For many reasons, of which the following is a sufficient one, never let fair strangers, who may accost you in the streets, under pretended acquaintance, or other excuses, lay hold of your arm.

Shake them off with a bow, and the assurance that they are mistaken, and cross the road directly; nay, as those ladies hunt in couples, they may endeavour to honour you by attempts to take you between them by each seizing upon one of your arms. You cannot avert too nimbly all the favours about to be conferred upon you, be it by these charmers themselves, or by some less elegant confederate, male or female, close at hand, and who, if a male, may, at night especially, bully, perhaps maltreat you, for having presumed to intrude yourself, as will be maintained by all, upon ladies to whom he may claim a close and endearing alliance. And in this pretended husband, father, or brother, you may behold some coarse, ruffian-looking fellow, of prize-fighting make and shape—one whose confident manner will betray the reliance which pervades his mind that his peculiar *je ne scai quoi* will impress you with such unfeigned respect as to paralyse all remonstrances on your part, even if a bare-faced removal of your purse, pocket-book, or watch, should have been discovered by you in good time, so as absolutely to be engaged in endeavours to obtain restitution.

From these few specimens a judgment may be formed of the value of the Baron's advice, suggested by much experience, how to walk with safety to person and pocket the perilous streets of London. Equally excellent are his general rules and cautions to be observed on the highways and roads near the outskirts of London. They are precisely such as we used always to observe half a century ago—more or less—when the highways and byways were far rifer than now with all sorts of danger.

Avoid at all times gateways, corners of streets, mews, lanes, and all obscure recesses, for they are the lurking-places of thieves, robbers, perhaps murderers. Not that they are at all times so haunted—but your business may be effectually done in one encounter—and therefore "accustom yourself never to pass such places without expecting the possibility of some such attack."

Keep the crown of the carriage-road—if wheels be unfrequent; and, if compelled to walk the causeway, keep the side farthest from the ditch. So may you prevent the rascals from surrounding you, and be able at once to make play.

Never suffer any man to come in close contact with you, whether he be walking before or behind;—if he hang on your steps—cross over—and if he do the same, outwalk him if you can. If you hear his step too close upon you, face about, and

make a sudden halt, "as if to examine something, yet looking at him firmly as he comes on towards you, thus to make him pass you; but doing all this without any flurry or menace." If he has not screwed his courage to the sticking-place, he will probably wish you good-night and pass on. Be in no haste to follow him—but step into the first public, and take a cheerer. But, continues the bold Baron, "if a fellow on the highway hangs down his head as if to baulk your scrutiny, and still continues about you, prepare yourself instantly to make the most desperate resistance; for he not only has determined on attacking you, but he will conclude his robbery with maltreatment—perhaps as long as symptoms of life appear, for fear you should swear to his person." It is often, therefore, a point not merely of delicacy, but of difficulty and danger, to look a fellow on the highway in the face on either a cloudy or clear night. If you do not, you cannot tell whether he intends to murder you or not; and if you do, he is sure to murder you if he can: for he cannot fail to remark that you are studying his phiz, that you may with a safe conscience swear to his person at the Old Bailey. Wherefore the considerate Baron counselleth "any timid or feeble person to refrain from scrutinising the features of robbers. They should not appear to know—if even they should recognise him—any felonious assailant, much less be so foolish as to call him by name." Yet here again it is dangerous to affect ignorance. They see through your cowardly hypocrisy, and fracture your skull.

What, then, are the best modes of self-defence against attacks, whether on the streets or on the highways and roads? —and this brings us to the third part of the Baron's discourse, from which we are selecting a few characteristic specimens. In it he draws his practical conclusions. And in the first place he directs our attention to "our tools or rather weapons." "The stick," he says well, "is an excellent weapon." "A stick," he does not hesitate to say—"in able hands, is nearly as good as a sword." Nay, in the hands of an inferior broadswordsman, it is—he maintains—even better. How so? Because a stick inflicts nearly equal pain by a blow from any part of the circumference, wherefore it has been jocosely called a sword having an edge all round. The best kind of sticks —are oak, ash, and hazel saplings, black thorn, and *sound*

ratans. Ratans, however sound, are apt to fly; but they suit persons whose arms are deficient in muscle, for they can be recovered quickly after a cut, and they cut sharp. We have always been partial to oak, though we have done good execution with ash, but "my own fancy," says the Colonel, "is in favour of the blackthorn." Its knobs save the knuckles, and it is your true Tom Tough. Black ratans are seldom sound—and most of the other canes are too springy for parrying and making true cuts. Great nicety of hand and eye are required in the selection of a well-shaped and sound stick; and some men, as if by intuition, will put their hand at once on the best plant in a hundred. "When I speak," adds de Berenger, "of a stick for defence, I need hardly tell you that the sticks of the present fashionable kind are least likely of all to support that denomination in the hour of danger. Nor do I mean a long and ill-shaped stick, such as the famed Colonel Hanger, afterwards Lord Coleraine, used to carry when riding on his grey galloway, and which he assured me he regularly 'steeped in port wine to make it tough.' I mean plain oak, crabsticks, or thorn, or ratans." Good sticks should taper something more than they commonly do; the points should be strong but slight, and the ferules small; the hand end should have a tendency to the oval, that it may lie more sword-like in the palm; and a leathern thong and tassel is necessary, that, by passing your hand through it, and giving one or two twists, you may "secure its retention sword-knot like." A knob at the handle end is an impediment; and to load the end with lead, "if not absolutely cowardly, is at least foolish," for it deducts from the severity of a cut from the point: such a loaded stick can only be used like a hammer, at close quarters; if you miss your blow you are gone, and there is nothing like *off fighting*, especially against odds.

The Baron holds tuck sticks in sovereign contempt. "A good swordsman, armed with a good blackthorn, may smile at being attacked by two, nay, even three tuck sticks,—one good parry to each will place the owners at his mercy: attacks from a tuck stick being with the point, you have only to use almost any of the small-sword disarming parries, quickly closing upon your assailant at the same time, in order to seize his right with your left hand, and after throwing the hilt end of your stick a little out of your hand, to strike it, with a back-handed

blow forcibly into his face or teeth ; and, as he staggers from you, to lay him at your feet, with either a severe cut on his head, or by giving point at his face with the proper end of your stick," armed with its small sharp ferule.

The Baron once owed his life to an *unsound ratan.* "It broke near the point, while I was applying a severe cut at the ribs of the most formidable of several footpads, whose ferocious attack gave me little hopes of extrication, nay, of life. It was saved, however, by mere chance ; for poising my broken stick to ascertain its length, it being dusk, the powerful fellow, who must have been a trooper from his bludgeon skill, took it for a feint, and throwing himself open by guarding his head, I seized the opportunity to give point at his face with the splintered end. It must have torn his face all to pieces ; for, with a deep groan, he staggered a few paces, turned, and ran away, and his companions scampered also, to my great relief, for they had nearly felled me by some very severe blows. On my return home, my servant discovered pieces of skin, with much whisker hair, forced into the splinters of the stick, showing that the wound, although resulting from the impulse of the moment, must have been a very dreadful one."

On an emergency, there are worse weapons than an umbrella. We never carry one now, and when we used to do so, do not remember having ever unfurled it in a shower. We used to whack with it the shoulders of raffs, as with the flat of a sabre, till they knew not whether to laugh or cry—whether we were in jest or earnest. Only in extremities we gave point. But we doff our bonnets to the Baron, and cheerfully acknowledge his superior skill and more original genius with the umbrella. "It may be opened quickly to serve as a shield to hide your pulling a pistol out of your pocket (taking care how you cock it safely with one hand) thereupon to shoot a robber, either through or under it—*taking great care to hit him.* I found it a valuable weapon, although by mere chance ; for, walking along in the rain, a large mad dog, pursued by men, suddenly turned upon me, out of a street which I had just approached ; by instinct more than judgment, I gave point at him severely, opened as the umbrella was, which, screening me at the same time, *was an article from which he did not expect thrusts*, but which, although made at guess, for I could not see him, turned him over and over, and before he could recover himself, his

pursuers had come up immediately to despatch him; the whole being the work of even few seconds: but for the umbrella, the horrors of hydrophobia might have fallen to my lot."

Umbrellas are usually carried in wet weather, and dogs usually run mad, if ever, in dry. So perhaps the safest plan is to carry an umbrella all the year through—like Wellington. Speaking of dogs, we find on page 242 some useful advice how to treat them when they are unreasonable—the "most efficacious mode" is quite a picture. "Dogs attacking you should be hit with a stick over the fore-legs, or over the nose or ear. The first application, however, is not only more easily executed, but also more distressing, even to a bull-dog." There is another mode, which, with the omission or alteration of a word or two, looks feasible, supposing we had to deal not with a bull-dog, but a young lady of our own species. "If you can seize a dog's front paw neatly, and immediately squeeze it sharply, he cannot bite you till you cease to squeeze it; therefore, by keeping him thus well pinched, you may lead him wherever you like; or you may, with the other hand, seize him by the skin of the neck, to hold him thus without danger, provided your strength is equal to his efforts at extrication. But here comes "a ridiculous, and with most dogs efficacious mode." "Look at them with your face from between your opened legs, holding the skirts away, and running at them thus backwards, of course head below, stern exposed, and above, and growling angrily; most dogs, seeing so strange an animal, the head at the heels, the eyes below the mouth, &c., are so dismayed, that, with their tails between their legs, they are glad to scamper away, some even howling with affright. I have never tried it with a thoroughbred bull-dog, nor do I advise it with them; though I have practised it and successfully with most of the other kinds: it might fail with these, still I cannot say it will."

One can hardly write about bull-dogs without thinking about bulls; and the Baron in the same letter—the 14th—entitled "Miscellaneous advice, and especially as to extrication from perilous situations," treats of the perils of horned cattle.

Bulls, cows, deer, and horned animals, generally charge with as much stupidity as desperation; you may avoid or even avert their horns, the first by activity and judgment, the second by a sharp cut

at the tip of the horn, which, owing to the force applied to the extremity of a lever, jars and hurts them, but it requires great expertness and decision; so far you may succeed, but you cannot resist, much less overcome, the weight and impetus of their charge: a winding run, with many and sudden turns, will serve you something; a coat, a hat—nay even and particularly a red handkerchief, dropped in your flight, will arrest the attention of the animal, to give you time to gain ground, whilst it is goring or smelling what you have thrown before it; but the best way is, to make for a large tree, if one is near, in order to stand closely before it, and even to irritate the animal to a charge, thereupon nimbly to slip on one side and behind the tree, which, receiving the charge, most likely will fling the assailant down, with the shock returned upon itself. I have been saved in a similar way from the fury of a bull, by making towards and placing myself before the wall of Bellsize park, for, as the bull dropped his head! and charged!! [for bear in mind there is no interval between the indication and a most rapid execution!] I made a side leap of six feet and more, to scramble away as fast as I could; but my fear was quite unnecessary, for, having broken one of his horns, and stunned himself otherwise, I left him laying with his tongue out and motionless: whether he recovered, or paid the forfeit of his life for his unprovoked malice, I had neither curiosity nor relish to ascertain, for he had given me a long and distressing heat to reach this wall, and which, by zigzags only, I effected; for he had more speed than myself, although then I was rather a superior runner, but, by overshooting the turn at each zigzag, he lost ground. Had he not been so very fast, I might have resorted to another mode, that of taking off my coat, and of throwing it over his horns; if ever you do the latter, you must not expect to wear it again, nor should I advise its use if you have any valuables in the pockets. Some recommend that you should leap over the bull's lowered head on to his back: it may do, if you can make sure of not falling off, for slip off you must of course; but, like hitting the beast a sharp blow across the fore-legs, it will do, and is an excellent application of gymnastics, provided you can make sure, for if you fail you are lost, or you are at his mercy at any rate. It is something like laying down, although not quite so tame, for that answers some times, that is, as a dernier resort, and provided you lay motionless; and then you should hold your breath, and also keep your face towards the ground. Make up your mind to being not only well smelled over by a bull or ox, but also turned over with the horns, and trampled upon, and, if that is all, you may get up contented when he is out of sight, for he may watch you suspiciously and cunningly; but with a wild boar, and certainly not with a stag, especially a red one, I should not like to experimentalise in this

way, although I have heard it recommended: most of the other methods may be found useful with these animals, as well as with oxen and bulls, but, like cows, most of these keep their eyes open when they charge, whilst a bull or an ox shuts them, an intimation you ought not to forget!

But let us return from this episode to modes of self-defence on the highways and roads against human assailants. If stopped on horseback by footpads, cuts five or six at the face with your whip—"a little lead may be tolerated in the handle"—are the most destructive. If you are armed with a hammer-ended hunting-whip you may hit where you can—but anywhere rather than on the head of footpad, for ten to one the crown of his hat is stuffed with hay, or straw, or wool, to fend a blow aimed at the top of his head. A country squire has been known to capture a footpad by throwing the lash of his hunting-whip round his neck, and then riding him down; but the Colonel "does not recommend that expedient," though in one case crowned with success. "Had the squire," says he, "seized the muzzle of the footpad's pistol in an averting direction, and followed it up by spurring his horse against and over him, it would have been by far the safest way." Unless you are satisfied you are ball-proof, don't imitate the squire.

The moment you are attacked by another footpad, seize his pistol with one hand—if possible in the direction of his head—at all events, away from your own—and with your other well-clenched fist hit him a sharp blow on the throat, upwards, so as to be stopped by his chin—the nails of your fingers of course towards yourself, and the back of your hand downwards, as is known to every natural pugilist. Up fly his heels, you kneel on his throat—secure the pistol—tie his hands behind his back with his own fogle, and march him to the station-house.

This mode of disposing of a footpad, and several others, are illustrated by very spirited plates. But should you be obliged to run away before superior numbers, let one—the best runner of course—gain a little upon you; then seem to make a desperate effort to get away, which will cause him to use what is called the top of his speed; let him come near you at that speed, and suddenly, but cleverly, drop before him on your hands and knees. "Swift as an arrow from a Tartar's

bow," the astonished footpad cuts the air, and falling on his face some ten yards in advance, he presents on your arrival a pleasing spectacle—"for his face will be all cut in pieces—you improve your advantage in every way you can"—and having battered his head well with your blackthorn, pursue your journey at double-quick time.

The great difficulty is to know how to deal with the swell mob. If hemmed in by numbers, grasp your stick by the middle, and thrust or poke with either end without ceremony or discrimination, chiefly directing such thrusts or pokes at their faces and stomachs. "Smart blows" may occasionally be dealt, but "they will not serve so well as forcible thrusts"—all the while keep kicking away at shins—and, says the Baron, "by active and determined industry you will soon make yourself an opening." If with your left hand you can get at your snuff you cannot do better than throw it in the eyes of the swell mob in a close. But take care not to waste your ammunition—nor remit the use of your sapling—till "smarting under blindness and sneezing they will open a gap for you, anxious as they will be to get away whilst labouring under so perplexing a situation."

Hitherto you have been attacked on foot or horseback, and have always come off victorious—so may you, if you but obey de Berenger, on finding yourself in presence of the enemy—cooped up in a post-chaise—or "open to the gales of fiercely-breathing war" in a gig. The first point to be determined is—"Shall I resist?"—and the Baron "most anxiously and earnestly beseeches you to answer, without vanity or stint of candour, the following questions, which you ought to put to yourself; for on the self-probing correctness of your inward reply, not only your property, but your life may depend." Say to yourself, 1st,—looking at your double-barrelled pistols—"May I rely on having sufficient firmness and self-possession to use them? 2d, Do I possess skill sufficient to use them to the purpose?" If the answers to these questions are at all unsatisfactory, at once deliver. If the "man within the breast" be resolute, then let the ghost of Abershaw himself stop you, and you will let the moonlight shine through him at the first pop. Attend to the Colonel.

Footpads, upon stopping a carriage, generally open one of the doors, one of their party remaining about the heads of the horses:

the moment they do so, coolly and steadily fire at the man whose pistol seems most to be directed towards you—present, sloping downwards, and rather below than at or above his chest: if you hit him, he will be disabled, although his life may be spared. If he fires at and misses you, drop as if wounded into the bottom of the carriage, and before he or they have recovered from their guilty surprise, you may, whilst lying at the bottom, shoot one or two of the footpads near the door; and the horses, probably startled by the firing, or urged by the driver, may knock down those near their heads; if so your carriage should start off, remain at the bottom of it, for if any of the gang fire at the back of the carriage—as was done by the noted Jerry Abershaw, who killed some gentlemen that way, you are less likely to be hit than if you place yourself on the seat.

In an open four-wheeled carriage these modes, it is allowed, are more difficult—in a gig more so still—indeed some of them impossible—but genius and presence of mind will enable the Stopped to adapt his conduct to the peculiar circumstances of each case as it occurs, and to strew the high-road with footpads. But suppose you have taken "one, and why not two prisoners," how are you to convey them to headquarters? Suppose you gained the night single-handed and on foot. Why, then, you must play the Prussian corporal. "They either make the men themselves (taken in battle), and a pistol pointed at a footpad would make him do it—or the corporals, cut off all the buttons from the waistband of the prisoners' small-clothes, and they slit the waistband down the hind part besides, taking away the braces also. This compels the fellows in marching to hold up their small-clothes with both their hands, an attitude which precludes their attacking, and impedes their running away."

We find that we have reached the limits set to this article, and grieve that it is not now in our power to show how persons falling into the water may, though they cannot swim, easily save themselves from drowning—how, with common coolness, any man may escape from a house on fire, and carry with him at least one woman; and how you may kill or capture any number of thieves who may have the rashness to enter your domicile at dead of night. But the truth is, we have given you but a glimpse of the contents of this library of useful and entertaining knowledge in one volume. Purchase it—for it is cheap at 14s., with its numerous embellish-

ments, by Mr Bonner and others, after designs by Messrs G. and R. Cruikshank, Alken, Haghe, Fussell, and De Berenger.

One lesson, however, we must read you from the Baron, for the art it teaches is indispensable to the domestic comfort of every man moving in civilised life. "To turn a person out of a room, at times may become necessary;" and how may it be best performed?

I shall state several ways of doing it, wherefore you can employ either, just as circumstances favour any particular mode. For example: if you perceive a favourable opportunity to seize the right hand of a troublesome person with your own right, do so, and, quickly lifting it, pass your left hand and arm under his right, to seize him by the collar with your left, fixing your antagonist's right elbow on your left arm at the same time. Now, by having placed the end of your own thumb upon the back of his right hand, you will have the power of twisting his hand outwards, and of pressing it downwards at the same time, your left arm becoming the fulcrum to his elbow, which giving him extraordinary pain, will raise him on his toes, and thus you can move him out of a room before you, so long as you keep his arms straight, and which you should not omit on any account. Or, seize a person by the collar of his coat, at the back of his neck, with one hand, and with the other lay hold of that part of his small-clothes, and just under his waistband, where they are roomy instead of tight; hoist him up by the latter hold, so as to bring him nearly on tiptoe, and, with a firm hold of his collar, push him forward, and off his balance, at the same time: to prevent himself from falling, he must move forward, and thus, by means of pushing and hoisting, you can easily steer him out of the room, or whichever way you please; you may, if he is of great weight, or you are afraid of his turning round to hit you, lay your own weight against his back, pushing him thus, as well as driving him on by the modes just stated.

MACAULAY'S LAYS OF ANCIENT ROME.[1]

[DECEMBER 1842.]

A MAN of genius told us, a good many years ago, that ours is a mechanical age, and, in his own eloquent way, gave us some of his reasons for thinking so; but, unfortunately, few of his followers have much of his wit or wisdom, and all of them have so long kept repeating pragmatically his *dicta*, that, but for the love we bear him, we should have lost our temper with Thomas Carlyle. Thank Heaven, it is a mechanical age; but, thank Heaven, it is likewise an intellectual and imaginative age; as ages go—even a moral and religious age. Consider that the vital functions of our souls and bodies are still dependent on machinery not worked by steam. It seems but poor philosophy to believe that mind can suffer loss in its nobler faculties from its power over matter—that the discoveries and inventions of physical science enlarge not the sphere of our spiritual being. With what, out of ourselves, have we human beings been contending since the birth of time, but with the difficulties of nature? As we continue to conquer more and more of them, so much power is left free to be employed in the harder conquest over the evils inherent in our own hearts. Again, then, we say, thank Heaven, it is a mechanical age—a practical age—an age of Utilitarians. The earth, as if to shame the seers in our own time, has by knowledge been made more and more productive of necessaries, comforts, and luxuries, after her fertility was said to be exhausted; and the great law is now seen to be, that as civilisation advances, population creates subsistence. Meanwhile, has the soil of the soul become barren?—and if so, from want of cultivation, or from having been overcropped?

We know not well how many years compose an age. And does it not, eagle-like, renew its youth? The present age

[1] *Lays of Ancient Rome.* By THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.

seems in its prime—yet we remember it holding its head high fifty years ago. To observe its character truly, and to the life, you must be conversant with all it has said and done. Be not so foolish, we beseech you, as to imagine, for a moment, that it is dead when it is but asleep—that it is asleep when it is but silent. Then, surely, there is an allowable resting on its arms, in august repose, after victories won. The age may be thinking, and therefore still and mute, till, all of a sudden, it rises up, and speaks like the sea.

Never again, as ye love us, say that the age has no imagination. It is the age of genius. A more poetical age never flourished. Thought and passion are prevalent in its highest literature. It rejoices in its

"Serene creators of immortal things."

Some of the greatest lately dropped the body—some are preparing to follow—few will be seen ten years hence—probably not one; yet the nations, while they are yet weeping, forget their grief, and remember that nature lets not her sweet and solemn singers die, but has destined them a life here below to fade but with the stars.

But, haply, you hold that the age we have been speaking of is past. You see numbers of young men and women; and, regarding them collectively, you call them the present age. The old and elderly seem to you lingering survivors of a time, along with which they had better have departed in the course of nature—and, impatient of their stay, you would forget them if you could; or you say, their day is over, while another and brighter sky salutes the new sons of the morning.

What say you, then, to them who call yours a mechanical age, and yourselves a generation of manufacturers? To refute them, produce your poets. Alas! of poets there are plenty—enow and to spare; but sad and strange to say, few will listen to the nightingales. In plain prose, poetry is declared a drug. The supply, it is averred, has outrun the demand. Oh, horror, there is a *glut!*—and Apollo shuts up shop, having appeared as apothecary in the Gazette—in the list of bankruptcies superseded!

Now, ours is a different opinion altogether on this matter. We assert there is no glut of the real commodity—the genuine article; but flimsy counterfeits of all the favourite patterns

have been so multiplied, that people are afraid to buy, and stand far aloof; and we need not dwell on prices in a market-place, how spacious soever, which is peopled exclusively by sellers.

But leaving the consideration of the law of supply and demand to the political economists, let us look in the face of the Pensive Public, and say whether or no we discern there any symptoms of indifference or disgust to poetry and poets. She doth wear, we confess it, a somewhat sourish aspect; but on what poetry, and on what poets, may the melancholy maid be musing? On the Small-beer School, or haply, on that of Imperial Pop? These Schools insist on being heard at all hours, even on the most solemn occasions; and what, we ask, can be more unseasonable than the sudden clunk or crack of a cork, during a formal forenoon call, an evening conversazione, a marriage, or a funeral? The beer may, like that of Trinity, be a very pretty beer, but it ought to learn to take things quietly, and be less ambitious; seldom doth brown stout, in that obstreperous style, seek to burst on the world—Glenlivet never. Yet sometimes to such report doth the Pensive Public her ear not ungraciously incline; and, putting forth her lily hand, she lifteth to her rosy mouth that of the importunate blackamoor; when, lo and behold! the contents have vanished in froth, and she kisses a barmy deposit.

But there is better poetry than the above to be had for love or money. Its cultivators "the primrose path of dalliance tread." They are "all for love and a little for the bottle"—nature is the mistress they adore—and with a phial in the left hand, of rose-water or prussic acid, they seem, while inditing a sonnet, intent on suicide. They excel in the pathetic and the sweetly pretty; but some of the more highly gifted among them are addicted to delineations of the darker passions, and their *forte* is the intense. Keep that threne some inches further from your noses and eyes, or they will water as at the contact of a vinaigrette. Remarkable inconsistencies of genius! That threne was indited by a curled darling with pink cheeks, who has occasionally performed the part of a peristrephic image in the window of a friseur!

Where shall we place "the mob of gentlemen who write with ease?" They have no connection with the swell mob, though that incorporation has its poets too; but are persons of

birth and breeding, and the best of them border on an agreeable mediocrity, that in manuscript appears tip-top composition. But, somehow or other, it does not stand being printed, and comes out very wish-washy from the press. Yet among them are prize poets, men who in their Club continue to cultivate the fine classical vein that distinguished them in their College. Nevertheless, Shelley and Keats are their idols; and they, too, must needs sing of the Sensitive Plant and Ruth.

Next come the professional poets. Most of them are young men from thirty to fifty years of age, who, having figured with effect in some chosen periodical while yet mere boys pretty well on in their third decade, come forth, when able to stand by themselves, in a separate volume, in the full effulgence of youthful manhood. Half a century ago, poets half a century old were gazed at reverentially by the risen generation, less perhaps on account of their genius than of their grey hairs. Nay, poets of a quarter of a century were respected for their years, and their images were combined in public imagination with those of a wife and small family. Nowadays they are regarded as precocious children, and the leading Reviews break out with prophecies of glory awaiting them in future years, when they shall be nearing man's estate. People in the provinces, who have not been let into the secret, start on their introduction to "one of the most promising of our young poets," at beholding a bald or bush-headed man of middle age, in spectacles, and, if not with an indisputable pot-belly, yet "corpulent exceedingly," and, by rude guess, fourteen stone avoirdupois. Some are indeed slender; but, with few exceptions, they agree in this—in case of a militia they are safe from the ballot.

For a good many years have we been praising the Young Poets—not without a sense of the ludicrous, patting their peurile heads. "Lyart haffets wearing thin and bare," look queer on an Apollo adolescens, fat fair and forty, blushing from his first maiden attempt before the eyes of the town. Why, "when our auld cloak was new," a poet was supposed to have reached the age of puberty at twenty—ere that term Campbell had realised the *Pleasures of Hope*—soon after it, Akenside the *Pleasures of Imagination.* A poet of thirty was reckoned quite an old stager, entreated by miss in her teens not to dance lest he should crack the Achillean tendon, or

bring down the floor. Now he leaves the dinner-table with the ladies, and hands the tea-cups.

> "Him, piteous of his youth, and the short space
> He has enjoy'd the vital light of heaven,
> Soft disengage."

To be serious—what have our Young Poets done? They pray for a soul like a sea, and out it squirts in a sonnet. They tell you that it flows like a river; but you know a canal when you see it, and a cut, too, before the water has been let on from the reservoir. A pond with a drooping willow, and a leash of wooden ducks, is a pretty close scene—quite a picture—but not for the pencil of a Turner. In landscape-painting by a great poet, we look for a breadth of canvass—or, which is the same thing, or better, "a region" on an oblong that might be put into your pocket. Our Young Poets, as Fanny Kemble used to say of herself in her Journal, potter, potter, potter, and all about themselves; morning, noon, and night, they potter, potter, potter all about their own dear, sweet, consumptive, passionate, small, infantile selves—trying at times to look fierce, nay facetious; and in the very whirlwind of passion, sufficiently tropical to lift up a curl tastefully disposed on their organ of identity three inches broad, are they seen picking obsolete-looking words out of a pocket edition of *Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary*—an artifice among the cognoscenti called "tipping the quaint." And thus are they occupied for years!—never for a moment conjecturing that possibly they may have immortal souls to be lost or saved. A pin-point burnisher appears in comparison a many-sided man, plying a various and comprehensive handicraft, in which mind ministers to metal, and on material substance all the spiritual faculties are brought into full play.

Our friends, the Young Poets, will forgive in the Old Man these splenetic moods of his own mind, "between malice and true love," worth a thousand eulogies from any other quill, and reconcilable not only with kind affection, but with high admiration. Why, ye are all boys of our own, ye dogs; and Crusty Christopher has celebrated your names—so he need not now mention them—over "whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms." And now we perceive that we have brought ourselves, by a pleasant circumbendibus, sweepingly round to

the very point from which we started in our initial sentence; and if there were any mystery before in the fact—if fact it be—that poetry is a drug, and a drug at discount, we think we have afforded the solution.

The lovers of poetry have fallen back on the old bards yet living, or but lately dead. By searching out, they find nothing in you Young Poets of equal excellence with the treasures lying in the works of your immediate predecessors, open to the whole world's use. Concealed beauties are nature's delights; but they are concealed by her, not that human eyes may miss them in the places of their nativity, but because by her fiat they love the shade, and live by glimpses of light that know the way into their most shy recesses. Lift up the leaf, and there is the flower. The buds are encaged in dew, but the blossoms affront the sun softly shining through trees; and in the forest glade, that bank, all spring long, has been gorgeous with unburning fire.

The lovers of poetry have fallen back on still older bards. Think ye Shakespeare and Milton are without their worshippers? God forbid they should be talked about as men talk about politics and the weather! But in how many thousand libraries—great and small—are they to be found? Bequeathed unawares from generation to generation—neglected by whole families during whole lifetimes—by their successors rescued from idle oblivion, their names again household words, and their spirits household gods!

> "Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
> The poets who on earth have made us heirs
> Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays!
> Oh! might my name be number'd among theirs,
> Then gladly would I end my mortal days."

So prayed Wordsworth—not in vain. Few are they who might blamelessly join in that prayer—that is, with justifiable hope of its fulfilment.

One grievous fault may be found with all our Young Poets—they want fire. Steel and flint seldom meet in their hands; when they do, the sparks fall on matter that will not ignite. Or we may say of them, that they walk into dark corridors with unlighted candles—with torches that will not flare up—with lamps unprovided with oil, as if the bearers thought the

polished burnish would the gloom illumine. They look like patients enjoying a partial recovery from ague—"Poor Tom's a-cold!"

And yet, such is the indestructible love of poetry in the hearts of men, that, in spite of all their wants, our Young Poets have been hailed with loud acclaim, and their merits, so far from having been overlooked or undervalued, have been allowed, and rated much above their intrinsic worth. Therefore the hearts of more than one of the worthiest have burned within them, not, alas! with more fervent heat of inspiration, but with flickering fires of vanity, thought by them to be pride; and, making golden calves of themselves, they have bowed down and worshipped their own reflections in brazen mirrors, artistically contrived for the solemn rites of self-adoration. Tell them they are calves—and sucking-calves, too—and they low against you with voices corroborative of the truth they deny. We pity Narcissus—but have no patience with the self-idolatry of the son of a cow.

No poet who hopes for immortality should ever look into a glass, except for a few minutes, on Saturday night, when beautifying his visage by a shave. Whereas, our Young Poets are seldom away from it—perpetually "holding the mirror up to nature," and falling "to such perusal of their face as they would draw it." We verily believe they see it in their dreams. It haunts every house in which they happen to take a night's lodging; and, in cases of indigestion, it grins at them through the physiognomy of the nightmare.

The world and we are beginning, we suspect, to be wearied of the Young Poets; and, in such peevish moods as will occasionally steal upon the most benign, we captiously inquire into their age. We give parish-clerks shillings to search parish-registers, and we fling in their teeth extracts establishing their conversion to Christianity before the present century had seen the sun. By deducting a few lustres from our own longevity, we find that the difference between our age and theirs is not worth mentioning; and, on their calling us Old Christopher, we ask them to explain. We then offer to show legs—challenge the most agile to the Houlachan, and set the question at rest for ever, by throwing a somerset.

Old Christopher, indeed! Do not, most pensive of Publics, accuse us of pride. We are railing in humility of heart at the sons of little men, for strutting on tiptoe, with smirking faces,

among the shadows of the mighty, and among the selves of the mighty yet moving sedately in flesh and blood on this our green round earth. Why, ours has been and is the Age of Gods, and Demigods, and Heroes, and Men. Nor among the Hoi polloi has there been a want of tall fellows. Why, then, all this strutting and smirking on the part of pigmies? How dare their Forlorn Hope, even to the maddening blare of many penny-trumpets, seek to storm Mount Parnassus?

Now, would you believe it, all this is intended for a preface or introduction to a short critique on Macaulay's "LAYS OF ANCIENT ROME!"

What! Poetry from Macaulay? Ay—and why not? The House hushes itself to hear him, even when "Stanley is the cry." If he be not the first of critics (spare our blushes), who is? Name the Young Poet who could have written THE ARMADA, and kindled, as if by electricity, beacons on all the brows of England till night grew day?

The Young Poets, we said, all want fire. Macaulay, then, is not one of the set; for he is full of fire. The Young Poets too, are somewhat weakly; he is strong. The Young Poets are rather ignorant; his knowledge is great. The Young Poets mumble books; he devours them. The Young Poets dally with their subject; he strikes its heart. The Young Poets twiddle on the Jew's harp; he sounds the trumpet. The Young Poets are arrayed in long singing-robes, and look like women; he chants succinct—if need be—for a charge. The Young Poets are still their own heroes; he sees but the chiefs he celebrates. The Young Poets weave dreams with shadows transitory as clouds; with substances he builds realities lasting as rocks. The Young Poets are imitators all; he is original. The Young Poets steal from all and sundry, and deny their thefts. He robs in the face of day. Whom? Homer.

We said just now—he is original. In his Preface, he traces what appears to him to have been the process by which the lost Ballad-poetry of Rome was transformed into history. And the object of his Ballads is to reverse the process—to transform some portions of early Roman history back into the poetry out of which they were made.

All scholars know that Niebuhr speaks of the *lays and legends* out of which grew the fabulous history of old Rome. He calls Livy's account of the battle at the Lake Regillus,

"a rich and beautiful epical narrative;" and says, "the gigantic battle, in which the gods openly take part, and determine the result, closes the *Lay of the Tarquins;* and I am convinced that I am not mistaken in conjecturing, that, in the old poem, the whole generations who had been warring with one another ever since the crime of Sextus, were swept away in this *Mort of heroes.*" "Lays of Ancient Rome," then, is not a thought of Macaulay's; but the thought, though suggested before, would not have appeared capable and worthy of execution except to a man of genius and a scholar, one who had a strong power of placing himself under the full influence of an imagined situation, and whose elaborate and accurate study of antiquity furnished him with an ample and authentic store of names and incidents, dress and drapery, manners and feelings. The seed scattered abroad found here a fit and fertile soil to receive it.

Let Niebuhr flourish; let truth, in its most rigid and critical particularity, be sought for and sifted. But, after all, the legends of a nation like Rome will be as full of truth as the dry bones of authoritative history. As history in general is said to be less truthful than poetry, so the fictions which were formed and cherished among a great people, though false in their details, may be more true in the spirit than the letter of the best attested discoveries which had been lost sight of in popular tradition.

That much of early Roman history must be fabulous, all men always knew; for they had no letters for centuries—no historians till centuries later—and all public monuments had been destroyed by fire. All, then, was left to tradition; and what faith could be placed in tradition, reaching back so far?

Tradition, it is easy to see, must, from many causes, still stray further and further from the truth in each succeeding generation. What innumerable unintentional inaccuracies must occur in each successive narrator's statement of the facts—from the gathering on them of obscurity, through which they loom larger than life, or sink into the shade, or are partially discerned, or recede into oblivion! Then how perpetual is the action of imagination upon every narrative! A slight variation in the circumstances of the event suggests a new meaning in it; and the event itself is then altered in its outline to sustain that idea of its significance. Sometimes

that is done involuntarily; oftener, perhaps, the process is wilfully indulged, as nothing more than an innocent ingenious restoration of the traces which time had obliterated.

But more powerful in its operation than all these influences, is the natural disposition in men to find something great and marvellous in the antiquity—in the "mighty youth" of a great nation. Otherwise it would seem as if the present greatness wanted an adequate cause.

"Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem!"

There are proud regards of the olden time natural to a people possessed of empire; and, as Livy pleasantly observes, we must just admit the one as we submit to the other. There was here justice in the fiction. If Romulus was not, he ought to have been, the Son of Mars.

Much of the early Roman history, then, is pure fable; but much of it also must have a basis of truth. When pure fable, must it be omitted from history? Livy thought not. But the obviously fabulous he generally gives as tradition (*fama tenet*), and traditions are a legitimate part of history when they are given as such. The pursuit of the fabulous in Roman history is not of the noblest, and sometimes it signally fails. Thus the story of Horatius Cocles was denied, because Polybius, who wrote before Livy, says that Porsena completely conquered the Romans, as if the two things were not perfectly compatible.

Out of a natural reverence of antiquity, springs, it would seem, a disposition in men to find in its history the marvellous in incident, as well as the marvellous in human character and achievement. Is not the *pure* fable often in the incidents? the *mixed* in the character and situation of the great men? Incident being the natural element of fiction; and hence the coinage easiest, and afterwards ready for the apprehension of all minds.

The legends of early Rome are well adapted to imaginative treatment, as themselves are the offspring of imagination. They have already received their first purgation from the dross of reality—they have been smelted, and lie prepared for another glowing furnace. Or may we not rather say, that the whole life and meaning of the early heroes of Rome are represented in the few isolated events and characters which have come down; and what a source of picturesque exaggeration

to these events and characters there is in the total want of all connected history! They have thus acquired a pregnancy of meaning which renders them the richest subjects of poetic contemplation; and to evolve the sentiment they embody in any form we choose, is a proper exercise of the fancy. For the same reason, is not the history which is freest of the interpreting reflection that characterises most modern histories, and presents most strictly the naked incident, always that which affords the best, and, as literature shows, the most frequent subjects of imagination?

The Roman character is highly poetical—bold, brave, and independent—devoid of art or subtlety—full of faith and hope—devoted to the cause of duty, as comprised in the two great points, of reverence for the gods and love of country. Shakespeare saw its fitness for the drama; and these "Lays of Ancient Rome" are, in their way and degree, a further illustration of the truth. Mr Macaulay might have taken, and we trust will yet take, wider ground; but what he has done, he has done nobly, and like "an antique Roman."

Who, when looking back upon the nations, with the view of understanding what that specific character of greatness may have been, which in the highest power of human achievement rested, in simple heroic magnanimity, *most absolutely upon itself*, feels not his imagination drawn irresistibly to the old warriors and statesmen—real or fabulous he cares not—the more fabulous the more real—of Republican Rome? Wielding, as they did, the only unmatched power that was ever known upon earth, nursed in arms and danger, sustaining each in his person the celebrity of a great ancestral name, and growing up alike to the highest charges of civil and military command—there could not well be a birth, a morning, and a noon of life, in which the spirit of the human heart might rise more gloriously and steadfastly in the consciousness and the capacity of a great destination. They knew nothing higher nor greater than the lot to which they were born, and they saw nothing above themselves; they stood at the top of earthly pre-eminence. Serving their ambitious country, they were called to enterprise without bounds; they must know no fear, nothing unachievable. The renown and the safety of the republic rested on the single leader of one day's battle. They must feel themselves to be invincible.

And these are indeed the characters which we find in these heroic minds: no height of daring was above their hope to climb; no invasion of peril could appal them; and whatever duty might be laid upon them, they felt themselves equal to the charge. What is extraordinary is, that among such numbers of intrepid, ardent, and unconquerable minds, engaged too in prosecuting ambitious wars, so many should have been found, in whom it does not seem that ambition had a place. They served their country's passion for conquest and renown, and yet kept themselves temperate, austere, and just. We cannot but think that we are to ascribe to the virtuous and simple manners of the early republic, that peculiar character of these great men, their own virtuous simplicity. We imagine nothing above the powers of their minds, or their noble desires, in those spirits which have made the earth blaze with their course. These ancient fathers of Rome are *their* equals. Whence is it, then, that their greatness did not break forth in ceaseless and consuming flames? Because the hand that had thrice triumphed returned to the plough; and the dictator must leave his new-turned furrows to take upon him the deliverance of Rome. It was the simple virtue of those stern but pure times—a virtue never forgotten—that was able, like a mighty spell, to control the grandeur of those unconquerable spirits, and confine them within themselves. And hence it is not possible for us to read their history, without feeling that there rests upon them the august renown of a moral greatness. They were sages in the calm and meditative quiet of their little field, as they were awful rulers while they held, in their might of princely counsel, the sway of the state—as they were dread leaders in the front of victorious fight. We can find no other explanation of what is scarce elsewhere to be found, nowhere else in such frequent example, the very height of heroic greatness with the simple plainness and contented obscurity, if the expression could be used, of these men, who, when they had discharged their part to their country, were indifferent further to their own glory.

But will we never have done? To the book.

The Ballad of Horatius is supposed to have been made about the year of the city CCCLX.—about a hundred and twenty years after the era it celebrates, and just before the taking of Rome by the Gauls. Lars Porsena of Clusium has sworn by

the Nine Gods to restore the Tarquins, and over all his dominions summoned his array. The Gathering is good, and proud may be the King; for

"There be thirty chosen prophets,
The wisest of the land,
Who always by Lars Porsena,
Both morn and evening stand:
Evening and morn the Thirty
Have turned the verses o'er;
Traced from the right on linen white
By mighty seers of yore.

And with one voice the Thirty
Have their glad answer given:
'Go forth, go forth, Lars Porsena;
Go forth, beloved of Heaven!
Go; and return in glory
To Clusium's royal dome;
And hang round Nurscia's altars
The golden shields of Rome.'"

The alarm in Rome is well described in a few picturesque stanzas, and the flocking in "from all the spacious champaign" of the terrified rustics, with their goods and chattels, old men, women, and children. Astur has stormed Janiculum; and the Fathers rush from the Senate to the walls.

"Outspoke the Consul roundly,
'The bridge must straight go down;
For since Janiculum is lost,
Nought else can save the town.'"

The enemy's van approaches the bridge—and Porsena in his ivory car is conspicuous, with Mamilius the Latian prince, and Sextus the ravisher, at his side.

"But when the face of Sextus
Was seen among the foes,
A yell that rent the firmament
From all the town arose.
On the house-tops was no woman
But spat towards him and hissed;
No child but screamed out curses,
And shook its little fist."

Nothing can be simpler than the soul-stirring stanzas in which Horatius offers to defend the pass till they hew down the bridge, and Spurius Lartius and Herminius step forth to join him, with a few sufficient words.

Meanwhile Fathers and Commons have not been idle, but with hatchet, bar, and crow, have been hacking away at the planks and props—a cry from the walls warns the Three to recross, and Lartius and Herminius having done their duty, obey it, but Horatius stands fast.

"Then with a crash like thunder,
Fell every loosen'd beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream;
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
As to the highest turret-tops
Was splash'd the yellow foam!"

There are critics who think they have paid a ballad of some six hundred lines, like this, the highest of all possible compliments, when they have said that they read it once and again right through, from beginning to end, without fatigue or ennui, and without skipping a single stanza—a week only having intervened between perusals. And nothing more common than to hear people in general speak of one perusal as the utmost demand any human composition can be privileged to make on any human patience. The instant they happen to take up a book they have "read before," that very instant they drop it, as if their hand were stung. Why, Sir Walter kept reciting his favourite old ballads almost every day in his life for forty years, and with the same fire about his eyes, till even they grew dim at last. He would have rejoiced in "Horatius," as if he had been a doughty Douglas. We have read it till we find we have got it by heart, and, as our memory is nothing remarkable, all the syllables must have gone six times through our sensorium.

We do dearly love to see a poem of action get over the ground. The bridge down, there was no time to lose, and no time is lost. Horatius is in no hurry—but he hastes. All is sudden and quick—the sight of his home—the prayer—the plunge—the silence—the cheers—the swim—the dry earth—

the shouting—the weeping—the elevation through the gate of the River who saved his hero. A tender touch or two come in here and there; and we especially applaud "his *gory* hands." Striking out in that style across good Father Tiber in flood, one might have thought his hands would need no more washing; but they did—and slight fingers and fair ones cleansed them in a silver basin; nor wanted his head, we venture to say, that night such pillow as once assuaged Mars, months before Romulus was born.

Porsena was a noble personage; and he "shines well where he stands," throughout the ballad. Much is made of his power and state on the march, for he knew what kind of city he sought to storm. But his magnanimity is grandly displayed by his behaviour at the bridge—in contrast with the false Sextus, cruel and pusillanimous ever. The conclusion of the ballad is eminently beautiful.

"The Battle of the Lake Regillus" is supposed to have been produced about ninety years after the "Lay of Horatius," and to have been chanted at the solemnities annually performed on the Ides of Quintilis, in commemoration of the appearance of Castor and Pollux on the great day decisive of the fate of the Tarquins. All the knights, clad in purple, and crowned with olive, met at a temple of Mars in the suburbs, and thence rode in state to the Forum, where the Temple of the Twins stood. This pageant was, during several centuries, considered as one of the most splendid sights of Rome.

The Lay opens abruptly, in the ballad style:—

"Ho, trumpets, sound a war-note!
Ho, lictors, clear the way!
The knights will ride, in all their pride,
Along the streets to-day.
To-day the doors and windows
Are hung with garlands all,
From Castor in the Forum,
To Mars without the wall."

Transition is finely made to the career of the Twins from the East, on the Great day—

"To where, by Lake Regillus,
Was fought the glorious fight;"

and, after some most impressive lines on the peaceful beauty in which the famous field has been lying for two hundred years, the poet sings of the origin of the war with the Latines (the demand by the Thirty Cities on Rome to receive the Tarquins), and the march of the Romans, under Aulus, the Dictator, to give them battle near the Lake. A splendid description ensues of the Latin host; and we cannot help quoting from it one most striking stanza :—

"Lavinium and Circeium
Had on the left their post,
With all the banners of the marsh,
And banners of the coast.
Their leader was false Sextus,
That wrought the deed of shame :
With restless pace, and haggard face,
To his last field he came.
Men say he saw strange visions,
Which none beside might see ;
And that strange sounds were in his ears,
Which none might hear but he.
A woman fair and stately,
But pale as are the dead,
Oft through the watches of the night
Sate spinning by his bed.
And as she plied the distaff,
In a sweet voice and low,
She sang of great old houses,
And fights fought long ago.
So spun she, and so sang she,
Until the East was grey ;
Then pointed to her bleeding breast,
And shrieked, and fled away."

Such fighting as forthwith ensues we have not read of for many a day. Mr Macaulay, in his prefatory note, tells us, almost in the words of Niebuhr (whose words he more than once uses without seeming to be aware of it), that the "Battle of the Lake Regillus," in Livy, is in all respects a Homeric battle, except that the combatants are on horseback instead of chariots. The mass of fighting men is hardly mentioned. The leaders single each other out, and engage hand to hand. The great object of the warriors on both sides, he adds, is, as

in the *Iliad*, to obtain possession of the spoils and bodies of the slain; and several circumstances are related, which forcibly remind us of the great slaughter round the corpses of Sarpedon and Patroclus.

The day is black on Rome; and the Dictator, looking north, asks Cossus, captain of the guard, what he sees "through yonder storm of dust come from the Latian right?" The banner of Tusculum—and, before the plumed horsemen, him of the golden helmet, purple vest, and dark-grey charger, Mamilius, Prince of the Latian name. The Dictator bids his captain ride southward, where Herminius is engaged with the Lavinians, and summon him to oppose Mamilius. Full soon

> "The cheering
> Rose with a mighty swell;
> Herminius comes, Herminius,
> Who kept the bridge so well!
>
> . . . .
>
> All round them paused the battle,
> While met in mortal fray
> The Roman and the Tusculan,
> The horses black and grey.
>
> . . . .
>
> Down fell they dead together
> In a great lake of gore;
> And still stood all who saw them fall
> While men might count a score!"

Like master like man, is an old homely saying—and we add, like rider like horse. Mamilius was a fiery spirit—so was Herminius—and they killed one another so suddenly, that they gave us no time to study and discriminate their characters, as they might have been exhibited in a protracted combat. But, if like rider like horse be an admitted truth, the Roman was the superior man of the two—the better to conduct a retreat or pursue a victory.

> "Fast, fast, with heels wild spurning,
> The dark-grey charger fled:
> He burst through ranks of fighting men;
> He sprang o'er heaps of dead.
> His bridle far out-streaming,
> His flanks all blood and foam,

He sought the southern mountains,
The mountains of his home.
The pass was steep and rugged,
The wolves they howled and whined;
But he ran like a whirlwind up the pass,
And he left the wolves behind.
Through many a startled hamlet
Thunder'd his flying feet:
He rush'd through the gate of Tusculum,
He rush'd up the long white street;
He rush'd by tower and temple,
And paused not from his race
Till he stood before his master's door
In the stately market-place.
And straightway round him gather'd
A pale and trembling crowd,
And when they knew him cries of rage
Brake forth, and wailing loud:
And women rent their tresses
For their great prince's fall;
And old men girt on their old swords,
And went to man the wall.

But, like a graven image,
Black Auster kept his place,
And ever wistfully he look'd
Into his master's face.
The raven-mane that daily,
With pats and fond caresses,
The young Herminia wash'd and comb'd,
And twined in even tresses,
And deck'd with colour'd ribands
From her own gay attire,
Hung sadly o'er her father's corpse
In carnage and in mire."

Titus Tarquinius—too good for such a race—springs forth to seize Black Auster, but Aulus of the Seventy Fights indignantly strikes him dead. Then stroking the raven mane, the Dictator says to Auster—

"'Now bear me well, Black Auster,
Into yon thick array,
And thou and I will have revenge
For thy good lord this day.'

So spake he; and was buckling
Tighter black Auster's band,
When he was aware of a princely pair
That rode at his right hand.
So like they were, no mortal
Might one from other know:
White as snow their armour was:
Their steeds were white as snow.
Never on earthly anvil
Did such rare armour gleam;
And never did such gallant steeds
Drink of an earthly stream.

. . . .

Then the fierce trumpet-flourish
From earth to heaven arose,
The kites know well the long stern swell
That bids the Romans close.
Then the good sword of Aulus
Was lifted up to slay:
Then, like a crag down Apennine,
Rush'd Auster through the fray.
But under those strange horsemen
Still thicker lay the slain;
And after those strange horses
Black Auster toil'd in vain.
Behind them Rome's long battle
Came rolling on the foe,
Ensigns dancing wild above,
Blades all in line below.
So comes the Po in flood-time
Upon the Celtic plain:
So comes the squall, blacker than night,
Upon the Adrian main.
Now, by our Sire Quirinus,
It was a goodly sight
To see the thirty standards
Swept down the tide of flight.
So flies the spray of Adria
When the black squall doth blow;
So corn-sheaves in the flood-time
Spin down the whirling Po."

That is the way of doing business. A cut-and-thrust style, without any flourish — Scott's style, when his soul was

up, and the first words came like a vanguard impatient for battle; as

> "When down came the Templars, like Kedron in flood,
> And dyed their long lances in Saracen blood."

The apparition of the Twins is seen by poetical eyes, and felt by a martial heart. God-like they are, yet men-like too. The Romans rejoice in the aid from heaven—if from heaven these strange horsemen be—but old Aulus fights as well as either—and Black Auster charges close at the heels of the steeds as white as snow.

The Dioscuri sustain their divinity as nobly in the city as by the lake.

> "Here, hard by Vesta's temple,
> Build we a stately dome
> Unto the Great Twin Brethren
> Who fought so well for Rome.
> And when the months returning
> Bring back this day of fight,
> The proud Ides of Quintilis,
> Mark'd evermore with white,
> Unto the Great Twin Brethren
> Let all the people throng,
> With chaplets and with offerings,
> With music and with song;
> And let the doors and windows
> Be hung with garlands all,
> And let the Knights be summon'd
> To Mars without the wall:
> Thence let them ride in purple
> With joyous trumpet-sound,
> Each mounted on his war-horse,
> And each with olive crown'd;
> And pass in solemn order
> Before the sacred dome,
> Where dwell the Great Twin Brethren
> Who fought so well for Rome."

The great occupation of the power of man in early society, is to make war. Of course, his great poetry will be that which celebrates war. The mighty races of men, and their mightiest deeds, are represented in such poetry. It contains "the glory of the world," in some of its noblest ages. The whole *Iliad* is war. If we consider warlike poetry merely as breathing the

spirit of fighting—the fierce ardour of combat—we fall to a much lower measure of human conception. The songs of Tyrtæus, goading into battle, are simply of this kind; and their class is evidently not a high one. Far above them must have been those poems of the ancient German nations, which were chanted in the front of battle, reciting the acts of old heroes, to exalt their courage. These, being breathed out of the heart of passion of a people, must have been good. The spirit of fighting was there involved with all their most ennobling conceptions; and yet was purely pugnacious. One would conceive that, if there could be found anywhere in language the real breathing spirit of lust for fight, which is in some nations, there would be conceptions and passion of blood-thirst—which are not in Homer. There are flashes of it in Æschylus. Lord Byron could have done it notably. We discern two distinct species of martial composition. One simply martial, which is a sort of voice to the spirit of war—of which there must have been many among the early states of Italy and Greece—national hymns and songs, with which the whole warlike feeling of the people was associated; something like the effect of the "Marseillais Hymn." And the other—the poetry of genius—which merely uses war, because there is grandeur in it; and partly, because it happens to be that species of greatness which has fallen under its own observation. This cannot properly be called martial—though it becomes martial at moments—truly addressing itself to the fighting nature of man. As to warlike poetry in these days of ours, it is not possible to doubt that there are many mighty poetical scenes to be derived from our warfare. A single mighty battle like Waterloo, deciding the fates that were in arbitration, might be the subject of a poem; because the contemplation of the destinies of nations is of the matter of poetry; and it is conceivable there might be a poem of the most exalted kind, by some Homer, in which the destinies of man, and the philosophy of the events of the Revolution, should be sung incomparably, and in the midst of which a battle of Waterloo, graphic even in its description, should have place; because such a battle, locally, and in a point of time, deciding such destinies by prowess of men, amidst fires and death, is in the highest degree poetical, bringing the usually indefinite shapes of the great agencies and processes of national events

for a moment into distinct and palpable reality, giving to the indefinite invisible powers a momentary presence in human life. In such a battle there might be a few famous names of men; and very technical terms of war might be introduced, inasmuch as they are words comprehending powers. This is merely to say that modern war may be made a subject of description in great poetry; but that is a very different matter from warlike poetry. The battle of Trafalgar would be a better instance—which, in some sort, neither began nor ended anything, but which was a sort of consummation of national prowess. That would have had its magnitude in itself. Such a poem could not have been a narrative one, which becomes at once a gazette: but it might have been to a great degree graphic. The purport of it would have been the power of England upon the ocean; and it would have been a song of glory. In such a poem, the character and feelings of British seamen would have had agency, and very minute expression of the feelings with which they fight would have been in place. In fact, the life of such a poem would have been wanting, if it had not contained a record of the nature of the children of the ocean—the strugglers in war and in storm. It seems to us more difficult to ground a poem under the auspices of the Duke of York or Lord Hill. The character of sailors, severed as it is from all other life, has more of a poetical whole: their fleet, too, borne on the ocean—being human existence resting immediately upon great elementary nature—and connected immediately with her great powers, and even to the eye single in the ocean solitudes—all is at once, and almost in itself, poetical. But military war is much harder to conceive of in poetry. Our army is not an independent existence, having for ages a peculiar life of its own. It is merely an arm of the nation, which it stretches forth when need requires. Thus, though there are high qualities in our soldiery, there is scarcely the individual life which fits a body of men to belong to poetry. In Schiller's *Camp of Wallenstein* there is individuality of life given to soldiery with good effect. We do not see that the army of Lord Wellington, all through the war of the Peninsula—though the most like a continued separate life of anything we have had in the military way—comes up to poetry. We think that if our army can be viewed poetically, it must be merely considering it as the

courage of the nation, clothed in shape, and acting in visible energy—to that tune there might be warlike strains for the late war; but then it would have nothing of peculiar military life, but would merge in the general life of the nation. There would be no camp life.

All which conclusions are rather inconclusive; because it is plain, that if any poet, breathing the spirit of battle, knew intimately the Peninsular War, it would rest entirely with himself to derive poetry from it or not. Every passion that is intense may be made the groundwork of poetry; and the passion with which the British charge the French with bayonets or sabres is, or may be believed to be, sufficiently intense to ground poetry upon. But it could not go a great way. It would merely furnish some chants of battle; and the introduction of our land-fighting into any great poetry, would, as we conjecture, require the intermingling of interests not warlike.

Of the circumstances that give a real character of greatness and sublimity to war, it may scarcely be necessary to speak. The imagination of all nations of men has acknowledged their grandeur. Even philosophical poets, treating with disdain the blind tumult of conflicting powers in which war consists —as Milton, who often speaks scornfully of war—yet avail themselves of its poetical greatness. It is, indeed, that blind fierce tumult that gives to war its essential grandeur. If there were nothing but an intellectual guidance of great powers, it would not have the same dread sublimity. But the unconquerable powers of courage and thought, struggling and maintaining their own supremacy in the midst of horrible and raging destruction, is essentially sublime; and the very *lowness* of the powers that are engaged in the conflict are requisite to this peculiar character. The pain—the rending of limbs and flesh—the material elements of destruction—the sword's remorseless edge—the lance driven through all defence—and yet more, perhaps, the bayonet piercing the naked breasts—bullets that fly like the arrows of chance—and the dread artillery that shatters away whole legions of men in its tempestuous sweep,—these, and the agonies of animal nature—writhings, groans, and shrieks, and savage exultation—flames, and sulphurous clouds—and the roar of battle, —all these things magnify the greatness of those spiritual

powers that walk in their unblemished majesty in the midst of this horrible strife: to all of which is to be added the effect of the beauty of material power—the splendour of arms and array — the magnificence of horses charging through clouds of smoke, throngs of men, or rivers—the admiration with which we look upon the strength, stature, and speed of men, when ministering to the work of their spirit. The very thundering of cannon is sublime, because it is a voice of destructive power—as the peal that rolls through the heavens—the bellowing of volcanoes—the flash in which the concentrated energy of destruction is visible to the eye.

But let us return to our book. Mr Macaulay says, that a collection, consisting exclusively of war-songs, would give an imperfect, or rather an erroneous notion of the spirit of the old Latin ballads; for the patricians, during a century and a half after the expulsion of the kings, held all the high military commands, and plebeians, however distinguished by valour and knowledge of war, could serve only in subordinate posts. The warriors mentioned in the two preceding Lays were all members of the dominant order; and a poet who was singing their praises, whatever his own political opinions might be, would naturally abstain from insulting the class to which they belonged, and from reflecting on the system which had placed such men at the head of the legions of the commonwealth. He therefore supposes that a popular Poet has made a New Song on the election of Lucius Sextinus Lateranus and Caius Licinius Calvus Stolo, Tribunes of the People, for the fifth time, in the year of the city CCCLXXII.; and, for that Song, the Poet—himself a plebeian—availing himself of the license of such an occasion, and burning with hatred of the Patrician Order, chooses the subject of all others best fitted to annoy Appius Claudius Crassus—grandson of the infamous decemvir —who had been in vain opposing the re-election of the men of the people—and to "cut the Claudian family to the heart." Just as the plebeians are bearing the two champions of liberty through the Forum, the Poet takes his stand on the spot where, according to tradition, Virginia, more than seventy years ago, was seized by the pandar of Appius, and recites to the crowd the Lay of which we here have the surviving fragments.

He begins fiercely, and, by a few strong strokes, brings

"the worst of all the wicked Ten" before the eyes of his auditors. His language is at first somewhat coarse, as it ought to be—and not the worse for that; but all at once his voice softens, and his words grow gentle, as he sees a vision of the young Virginia.

"Just then, as through one cloudless chink in a black stormy sky
Shines out the dewy morning-star, a fair young girl came by.
With her small tablets in her hand, and her satchel on her arm,
Home she went bounding from the school, nor dreamed of shame or harm;
And past those dreaded axes she innocently ran,
With bright, frank brow that had not learned to blush at gaze of man;
And up the Sacred Street she turned, and, as she danced along,
She warbled gaily to herself lines of the good old song,
How for a sport the princes came spurring from the camp,
And found Lucrece, combing the fleece, under the midnight lamp.
The maiden sang as sings the lark, when up he darts his flight,
From his nest in the green April corn, to meet the morning light;
And Appius heard her sweet young voice, and saw her sweet young face,
And loved her with the accursed love of his accursed race,
And all along the Forum, and up the Sacred Street,
His vulture eye pursued the trip of those small glancing feet."

Here some verses of the Lay are supposed to be lost; and then comes an animated narrative of the commotion caused by the seizure of Virginia by Marcus, the creature of Appius Claudius, on pretence of her being his slave. The crowd are awed by the sound of the Claudian name—but

"Forth through the throng of gazers the young Icilius press'd
And stamp'd his foot, and rent his gown, and smote upon his breast,
And sprang upon that column, by many a minstrel sung,
Whereon three mouldering helmets, three rusting swords are hung,
And beckon'd to the people, and in bold voice and clear
Pour'd thick and fast the burning words which tyrants quake to hear.

'Now, by your children's cradles, now by your fathers' graves,
Be men to-day, Quirites, or be for ever slaves!
For this did Servius give us laws? For this did Lucrece bleed?
For this was the great vengeance done on Tarquin's evil seed?

For this did those false sons make red the axes of their sire?
For this did Scævola's right hand hiss in the Tuscan fire?
Shall the vile fox-earth awe the race that storm'd the lion's den?
Shall we, who could not brook one lord, crouch to the wicked Ten?
Oh for that ancient spirit which curb'd the Senate's will!
Oh for the tents which in old time whiten'd the Sacred Hill!
In those brave days our fathers stood firmly side by side;
They faced the Marcian fury; they tamed the Fabian pride:
They drove the fiercest Quinctius an outcast forth from Rome;
They sent the haughtiest Claudius with shiver'd fasces home.
But what their care bequeath'd us our madness flung away:
All the ripe fruit of threescore years was blighted in a day.
Exult, ye proud Patricians! The hard-fought fight is o'er.
We strove for honours—'twas in vain: for freedom—'tis no more.
No crier to the polling summons the eager throng;
No Tribune breathes the word of might that guards the weak from wrong.
Our very hearts, that were so high, sink down beneath your will.
Riches, and lands, and power, and state—ye have them:—keep them still.
Still keep the holy fillets; still keep the purple gown,
The axes, and the curule chair, the car, and laurel crown:
Still press us for your cohorts, and, when the fight is done,
Still fill your garners from the soil which our good swords have won.
Still, like a spreading ulcer, which leech-craft may not cure,
Let your foul usance eat away the substance of the poor.
Still let your haggard debtors bear all their fathers bore;
Still let your dens of torment be noisome as of yore;
No fire when Tiber freezes; no air in dog-star heat;
And store of rods for free-born backs, and holes for free-born feet.
Heap heavier still the fetters; bar closer still the grate;
Patient as sheep we yield us up unto your cruel hate.
But, by the Shades beneath us, and by the Gods above,
Add not unto your cruel hate your yet more cruel love!
Have ye not graceful ladies, whose spotless lineage springs
From Consuls and High Pontiffs, and ancient Alban kings?
Ladies, who deign not on our paths to set their tender feet,
Who from their cars look down with scorn upon the wondering street,
Who in Corinthian mirrors their own proud smiles behold,
And breathe of Capuan odours, and shine with Spanish gold?
Then leave the poor Plebeian his single tie to life—
The sweet, sweet love of daughter, of sister, and of wife,
The gentle speech, the balm for all that his vexed soul endures,
The kiss, in which he half forgets even such a yoke as yours.

Still let the maiden's beauty swell the father's breast with pride ;
Still let the bridegroom's arms enfold an unpolluted bride.
Spare us the inexpiable wrong, the unutterable shame,
That turns the coward's heart to steel, the sluggard's blood to flame,
Lest when our latest hope is fled, ye taste of our despair,
And learn by proof, in some wild hour, how much the wretched dare!'"

Out of Scripture, neither man nor woman, we believe, can bear to read of Jephtha's daughter. Iphigenia at Aulis is a spectacle from which we avert our eyes—and thinking of it, we could almost pardon Clytemnestra for despatching Agamemnon. Brutus condemns his sons to death with shut doors—to us, at least, the court that day is closed. It is too horrid for us to hear Medea murdering her children—for ears communicate to the soul as dismally as eyes—witness panics. We shall not say a word of the smothering of Desdemona. Call them sacrifices—not murders—but shudder. In Rome a father's power was great—and sacred in his soul the virginity of a daughter. Slavery and pollution are in themselves worse than death—and we do not condemn Virginius. The legend accompanies well that of Lucretia, and could have risen and prevailed only among a virtuous people.

"Straightway Virginius led the maid a little space aside,
To where the reeking shambles stood, piled up with horn and hide,
Close to yon low dark archway, where, in a crimson flood,
Leaps down to the great sewer the gurgling stream of blood.
Hard by, a flesher on a block had laid his whittle down :
Virginius caught the whittle up, and hid it in his gown :
And then his eyes grew very dim, and his throat began to swell,
And in a hoarse changed voice he spake, 'Farewell, sweet child! Farewell!
Oh! how I loved my darling! Though stern I sometimes be,
To thee, thou know'st, I was not so. Who could be so to thee?
And how my darling loved me! How glad she was to hear
My footstep on the threshold when I came back last year!
And how she danced with pleasure to see my civic crown,
And took my sword, and hung it up, and brought me forth my gown!

Now all those things are over—yes, all thy pretty ways,
Thy needlework, thy prattle, thy snatches of old lays;
And none will grieve when I go forth, or smile when I return,
Or watch beside the old man's bed, or weep upon his urn.
The house that was the happiest within the Roman walls,
The house that envied not the wealth of Capua's marble halls,
Now, for the brightness of thy smile, must have eternal gloom,
And for the music of thy voice, the silence of the tomb.
The time is come. See how he points his eager hand this way!
See how his eyes gloat on thy grief, like a kite's upon the prey!
With all his wit, he little deems, that, spurned, betrayed, bereft,
Thy father hath in his despair one fearful refuge left.
He little deems that in this hand I clutch what still can save
Thy gentle youth from taunts and blows, the portion of the slave;
Yea, and from nameless evil, that passeth taunt and blow—
Foul outrage which thou know'st not, which thou shalt never know.
Then clasp me round the neck once more, and give me one more kiss;
And now, mine own dear little girl, there is no way but this.'
With that he lifted high the steel, and smote her in the side,
And in her blood she sank to earth, and with one sob she died."

This is the only passage in the volume that can be called—in the usual sense of the word—pathetic. It is, indeed, the only passage in which Mr Macaulay has sought to stir up that profound emotion. Has he succeeded? We hesitate not to say he has, to our heart's desire. Pity and terror are both there—but pity is the stronger; and, though we almost fear to say it, horror there is none—or, if there be, it subsides wholly towards the close, which is followed by a feeling of peace. This effect has been wrought simply by letting the course of the great natural affections flow on, obedient to the promptings of a sound, manly heart, unimpeded and undiverted by any alien influences, such as are but too apt to steal in upon inferior minds when dealing imaginatively with severe trouble, and to make them forget, in the indulgence of their own self-esteem, what a sacred thing is misery.

In the hubbub is heard a father's curse—and the howl of Appius Claudius, mad with rage and fear, as Virginius strides off to call vengeance from the camp.

"By this the flood of people was swollen from every side,
And streets and porches round were filled with that o'erflowing tide;
And close around the body gathered a little train
Of them that were the nearest and dearest to the slain.
They brought a bier and hung it with many a cypress crown,
And gently they uplifted her, and gently laid her down.
The face of Appius Claudius wore the Claudian scowl and sneer,
And in the Claudian note he cried, 'What doth this rabble here?
Have they no crafts to mind at home, that hitherward they stray?
Ho! lictors, clear the market-place, and fetch the corpse away!'
The voice of grief and fury till then had not been loud;
But a deep sullen murmur wandered among the crowd,
Like the moaning noise that goes before the whirlwind on the deep,
Or the growl of a fierce watch-dog but half aroused from sleep.
But when the lictors at that word, tall yeomen all and strong,
Each with his axe and sheaf of twigs, went down into the throng,
Those old men say, who saw that day of sorrow and of sin,
That in the Roman Forum was never such a din.
The wailing, hooting, cursing, the howls of grief and hate,
Were heard beyond the Pincian hill, beyond the Latin gate.
But close around the body, where stood the little train
Of them that were the nearest and dearest to the slain,
No cries were there, but teeth set fast, low whispers, and black frowns,
And breaking up of benches, and girding up of gowns.
'Twas well the lictors might not pierce to where the maiden lay,
Else surely had they been all twelve torn limb from limb that day.
Right glad they were to struggle back, blood streaming from their heads,
With axes all in splinters, and raiment all in shreds.
Then Appius Claudius gnaw'd his lip, and the blood left his cheek;
And thrice he beckon'd with his hand, and thrice he strove to speak:
And thrice the tossing Forum set up a frightful yell.
'See, see, thou dog! what hast thou done; and hide thy shame in hell!
Thou that wouldst make our maidens slaves must first make slaves of men.
Tribunes! Hurra for Tribunes! Down with the wicked Ten!'
And straightway, thick as hailstones, came whizzing through the air
Pebbles, and bricks, and potsherds, all round the curule chair:

And upon Appius Claudius great fear and trembling came ;
For never was a Claudius yet brave against aught but shame.
Though the great houses love us not, we own, to do them right,
That the great houses, all save one, have borne them well in fight.
Still Caius of Corioli, his triumphs, and his wrongs,
His vengeance, and his mercy, live in our camp-fire songs.
Beneath the yoke of Furius oft have Gaul and Tuscan bow'd ;
And Rome may bear the pride of him of whom herself is proud.
But evermore a Claudius shrinks from a stricken field,
And changes colour like a maid at sight of sword and shield.
The Claudian triumphs all were won within the City-towers ;
The Claudian yoke was never press'd on any necks but ours.
A Cossus, like a wild-cat, springs ever at the face ;
A Fabius rushes like a boar against the shouting chase ;
But the vile Claudian litter, raging with currish spite,
Still yelps and snaps at those who run, still runs from those who smite.
So now 'twas seen of Appius. When stones began to fly,
He shook, and crouch'd, and wrung his hands, and smote upon his thigh.
'Kind clients, honest lictors, stand by me in this fray !
Must I be torn in pieces ? Home, home, the nearest way !'
While yet he spake, and look'd around with a bewildered stare,
Four sturdy lictors put their necks beneath the curule chair ;
And fourscore clients on the left, and fourscore on the right,
Array'd themselves with swords and staves, and loins girt up for fight.
But, though without or staff or sword, so furious was the throng,
That scarce the train with might and main could bring their lord along.
Twelve times the crowd made at him ; five times they seized his gown :
Small chance was his to rise again, if once they got him down :
And sharper came the pelting ; and evermore the yell—
'Tribunes ! we will have Tribunes !'—rose with a louder swell :
And the chair tossed as tosses a bark with tattered sail
When raves the Adriatic beneath an Eastern gale,
When the Calabrian sea-marks are lost in clouds of spume,
And the great Thunder-Cape has donn'd his veil of inky gloom.
One stone hit Appius in the mouth, and one beneath the ear ;
And ere he reach'd Mount Palatine he swoon'd with pain and fear,
His cursed head, that he was wont to hold so high with pride,
Now, like a drunken man's, hung down, and sway'd from side to side ;

And when his stout retainers had brought him to his door,
His face and neck were all one cake of filth and clotted gore.
As Appius Claudius was that day, so may his grandson be.
God send Rome one such other sight, and send me there to see!"

No such mob-orator and poet, in our days, have our Tribunes of the People. Such spokesmen might do the state some mischief—haply some service. Thank Heaven, the history of our party feuds can show no comparable crime; yet there is no want of fuel in the annals of the poor, if there were fire to set it ablaze. What mean we by mob? The rabble? No! The rascal many? No! no! The swinish multitude? No! no! no! Burke never in all his days called the lower orders of Parisians, at any period of the Revolution, "*the* swinish multitude." His words are, "*that* swinish multitude"—at one particular hour, a multitude of wild, two-legged animals, dancing, all drunk with blood, round a pole surmounted with the bright-haired head of a princess, who had all her life been a sister of charity to the poor. Mob is *mobile.* It matters not much how it is composed, provided only it be of the common run of men and women, and that they have, or think they have, wrongs to be redressed or avenged.

But let us compose ourselves with the "Prophecy of Capys"—a Lay sung at the Banquet in the Capitol, on the day when Manius Curius Dentatus, a second time Consul, triumphed over King Pyrrhus and the Tarentines, in the year of the city CCCCLXXIX. "On such a day," says Macaulay, "we may suppose that the patriotic enthusiasm of a Latin poet would vent itself in reiterated shouts of *Io Triumphe*, such as were uttered by Horace on a far less exciting occasion, and in boasts resembling those which Virgil, two hundred and fifty years later, put into the mouth of Anchises. The superiority of some foreign nation, and especially of the Greeks, in the lazy arts of peace, would be admitted with disdainful candour; but pre-eminence in all the qualities which fit a people to subdue and govern mankind, would be claimed for the Romans."

Yes, say we, the mighty effects of imagination may be observed in the lofty patriotism of that great Republic, which rose from such small beginnings, and at length looked down from its seven hills on a conquered world. Among her noble

warriors, the sublime idea of mighty Rome seemed almost to justify and consecrate the deeds she commanded, and the iniquitous wars that were to extend her destined glory. Though continually in arms, her children seldom fought to defend their country; their battles were waged to yoke people after people to the car of her triumphs. Men just, and wise, and virtuous, and kind, in the relations of private life, went forth as the willing servants of her ambitious greatness; and, in the midst of her long-continued victory, felt their spirits elated and sustained by love of that country which knew no law but the desire of still-spreading dominion. Their justice and their wisdom lay prostrate under the delusive imagination of a sacred right in that country to command their obedience—under the belief that the gods befriended, and fate had decreed her greatness. They bowed down, in the worship of their souls, before that majestic greatness which was to overshadow land after land; and knew of no right violated, and no duty left undone, while, keeping their allegiance, they obeyed her fierce mandates to subdue or to destroy. One image was in their souls: Rome, great and glorious, fulfilling her conquering destinies. To that they devoted their unprized life. In that they were content to find their perpetual fame. In that they accomplished the law of their severe and arduous virtue. When we remember what men they were whom that "high and palmy state" sent forth to execute her triumphs, our mind is filled with wonder, in contemplating the lofty character of their invincible souls; when we consider in what service they grew to their lofty stature, our wonder is augmented; but it may cease, if we consider the power which imagination may hold over the whole spirit of a magnanimous and mighty people; and when we consider what was that awful idea of their country, which held bound, as under a spell, the imagination of the whole Roman race. Their great poet has, indeed, admirably expressed the conception of this never-forgotten principle of Roman minds, this ruling purpose and belief of their spirits through all time, when he has led the founder of the line into the shades, and there his father, the old Anchises, shows him the future heroes of his race, the spirits of the unborn warriors of Rome, and prophetically describing their

fame, he breaks out at last into an inspired exclamation which might seem as directing, with oracular power and preternatural command, the spirit of their deeds through their victorious career of ages to come.

> "Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento.
> Hæ tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem,
> Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos."

This conception of the City of Mars, as of a power endowed for conquest and dominion, seems to have been perpetually present to the imagination of those great spirits, and to have transformed the virtue of their heroic patriotism into the service of a gigantic and unprincipled ambition.

Perhaps the "Prophecy of Capys" is the loftiest Lay of the Four. The child of Mars, and foster-son of the she-wolf, is wonderfully well exhibited throughout in his hereditary qualities; and grandly in the Triumph, where the exultation breaks through, that all this gold and silver is subservient to the Roman steel—all the skill and craft of refinement and ingenuity must obey the voice of Roman valour. There are many such things scattered up and down Horace's Odes; but we can scarcely remember any that are more spirited, more racy, or more characteristic, than these Lays; and perhaps the nobility of the early Roman character is as fondly admired and fitly appreciated by an English freeman, as by a courtier of the reign of Augustus.

It is a great merit of these poems that they are free from ambition or exaggeration. Nothing seems overdone — no tawdry piece of finery disfigures the simplicity of the plan that has been chosen. They seem to have been framed with great artistical skill—with much self-denial, and abstinence from anything incongruous—and with a very successful imitation of the effects intended to be represented. Yet every here and there images of beauty, and expressions of feeling, are thrown out that are wholly independent of Rome or the Romans, and that appeal to the widest sensibilities of the human heart. In point of homeliness of thought and language, there is often a boldness which none but a man conscious of great powers of writing would have ventured to show.

In these rare qualities, *The Lays of Ancient Rome* resemble Lockhart's *Spanish Ballads*, which must have been often ringing in Macaulay's ears, since first he caught their inspiring music more than twenty years ago—when, "like a burnished fly in pride of May," he bounced through the open windows of *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*. Two such volumes all a summer's day you may seek without finding among the *works!* of "our Young Poets." People do not call Lockhart and Macaulay poets at all—for both have acquired an inveterate habit of writing prose in preference to verse, and first-rate prose too; but then the genius of the one man is as different as may be from that of the other—agreeing, however, in this, that each exhibits bone and muscle sufficient, if equitably distributed among ten "Young Poets," to set them up among the "rural villages" as strong men, who might even occasionally exhibit in booths as giants.

A FEW WORDS ON SHAKESPEARE.

[MAY 1819.]

SHAKESPEARE is of no age. He speaks a language which thrills in our blood in spite of the separation of two hundred years. His thoughts, passions, feelings, strains of fancy, all are of this day, as they were of his own—and his genius may be contemporary with the mind of every generation for a thousand years to come. He, above all poets, looked upon men, and lived for mankind. His genius, universal in intellect and sympathy, could find, in no more bounded circumference, its proper sphere. It could not bear exclusion from any part of human existence. Whatever in nature and life was given to man, was given in contemplation and poetry to him also, and over the undimmed mirror of his mind passed all the shadows of our mortal world. Look through his plays, and tell what form of existence, what quality of spirit, he is most skilful to delineate? Which of all the manifold beings he has drawn, lives before our thoughts, our eyes, in most unpictured reality? Is it Othello, Shylock, Falstaff, Lear, the Wife of Macbeth, Imogen, Hamlet, Ariel? In none of the other great dramatists do we see anything like a perfected art. In their works, everything, it is true, exists in some shape or other, which can be required in a drama taking for its interest the absolute interest of human life and nature; but, after all, may not the very best of their works be looked on as sublime masses of chaotic confusion, through which the elements of our moral being appear? It was Shakespeare, the most unlearned of all our writers, who first exhibited on the stage perfect models, perfect images of all human characters, and of all human events. We cannot conceive any skill that could from his great characters remove any defect, or add to their

perfect composition. Except in him, we look in vain for the entire fulness, the self-consistency, and self-completeness of perfect art. All the rest of our drama may be regarded rather as a testimony of the state of genius—of the state of mind of the country, full of great poetical disposition, and great tragic capacity and power—than as a collection of the works of an art. Of Shakespeare and Homer alone it may be averred, that we miss in them nothing of the greatness of nature. In all other poets we do; we feel the measure of their power, and the restraint under which it is held; but in Shakespeare and in Homer, all is free and unbounded as in nature; and as we travel along with them, in a car drawn by celestial steeds, our view seems ever interminable as before, and still equally far off the glorious horizon.

If we may be permitted to exceed the measure of the occasion to speak so much of Shakespeare himself, may we presume yet farther, and go from our purpose to speak of his individual works? Although there is no one of them that does not bear marks of his unequalled hand—scarcely one which is not remembered by the strong affection of love and delight towards some of its characters, yet to all his readers they seem marked by very different degrees of excellence, and a few are distinguished above all the rest. Perhaps the four that may be named, as those which have been to the popular feeling of his countrymen the principal plays of their great dramatist, and which would be recognised as his master-works by philosophical criticism, are *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Lear*. The first of these has the most entire tragic action of any of his plays. It has, throughout, one awful interest, which is begun, carried through, and concluded with the piece. This interest of the action is a perfect example of a most important dramatic unity, preserved entire. The matter of the interest is one which has always held a strong sway over human sympathy, though mingled with abhorrence, the rise and fall of ambition. Men look on the darings of this passion with strong sympathy, because it is one of their strongest inherent feelings—the aspiring of the mind through its consciousness of power, shown in the highest forms of human life. But it is decidedly a historical, not a poetical interest. Shakespeare has made it poetical by two things chiefly—not the character of Macbeth, which

is itself historical—but by the preternatural agencies with which the whole course of the story is involved, and by the character of Lady Macbeth. The illusion of the dagger and the sleep-walking may be added as individual circumstances tending to give a character of imagination to the whole play. The human interest of the piece is the acting of the purpose of ambition, and the fate which attends it—the high capacities of blinded desire in the soul—and the moral retribution which overrules the affairs of men. But the poetry is the intermingling of preternatural agency with the transactions of life —threads of events spun by unearthly hands—the scene of the cave which blends unreality with real life—the preparation and circumstances of midnight murder—the superhuman calmness of guilt, in its elated strength, in a woman's soul—and the dreaminess of mind which is brought on those whose spirits have drunk the cup of their lust. The language of the whole is perhaps more purely tragic than that of any other of Shakespeare's plays—it is simple, chaste, and strong—rarely breaking out into fanciful expression, but a vein of imagination always running through. The language of Macbeth himself is often exceedingly beautiful. Perhaps something may be owing to national remembrances and associations; but we have observed, that in Scotland at least, *Macbeth* produces a deeper, a more breathless, and a more perturbing passion, in the audience, than any other drama.

If *Macbeth* is the most perfect in the tragic action of the story, the most perfect in tragic passion is *Othello*. There is nothing to determine unhappiness to the lives of the two principal persons. Their love begins auspiciously; and the renown, high favour, and high character of Othello seem to promise a stability of happiness to himself and the wife of his affections. But the blood which had been scorched in the veins of his race, under the suns of Africa, bears a poison that swells up to confound the peace of the Christian marriage-bed. He is jealous; and the dreadful overmastering passion, which disturbs the steadfastness of his own mind, overflows upon his life, and hers, and consumes them from the earth. The external action of the play is nothing—the causes of events are none; the whole interest of the story, the whole course of the action, the causes of all that happens, live all in the breast

of Othello. The whole destiny of those who are to perish lies in his passion. Hence the high tragic character of the play —showing one false illusory passion ruling and confounding all life. All that is below tragedy in the passion of love is taken away at once by the awful character of Othello, for such he seems to us to be designed to be. He appears never as a lover—but at once as a husband—and the relation of his love made dignified, as it is a husband's justification of his marriage, is also dignified as it is a soldier's relation of his stern and perilous life. It is a courted, not a wooing, at least unconsciously-wooing love, and though full of tenderness, yet it is but slightly expressed, as being solely the gentle affection of a strong mind, and in no wise a passion. "And I loved her that she did pity them." Indeed, he is not represented as a man of passion, but of stern, sedate, immovable mood. "I have seen the cannon, that, like the devil, from his very arm puffed his own brother—and can *he* be angry?" Montalto speaks with the same astonishment, calling him respected for wisdom and gravity. Therefore it is no love story. His love itself, as long as it is happy, is perfectly calm and serene, the protecting tenderness of a husband. It is not till it is disordered that it appears as a passion. Then is shown a power in contention with itself—a mighty being struck with death, and bringing up from all the depths of life convulsions and agonies. It is no exhibition of the power of the passion of love—but of the passion of life vitally wounded, and self-overmastering. What was his love? He had placed all his faith in good—all his imagination of purity, all his tenderness of nature, upon one heart,—and at once that heart seems to him —an ulcer. It is that recoiling agony that shakes his whole body—that having confided with the whole power of his soul, he is utterly betrayed—that having departed from the pride and might of his life, which he held in his conquest and sovereignty over men, to rest himself upon a new and gracious affection, to build himself and his life upon one beloved heart, having found a blessed affection which he had passed through life without knowing, and having chosen in the just and pure goodness of his will to take that affection instead of all other hopes, desires, and passions, to live by, that at once he sees it sent out of existence, and a damned thing standing in its

place. It is then that he feels a forfeiture of all power, and a blasting of all good. If Desdemona had been really guilty, the greatness would have been destroyed, because his love would have been unworthy—false. But she is good, and his love is most perfect, just, and good. That a man should place his perfect love on a wretched thing, is miserably debasing, and shocking to thought; but that, loving perfectly and well, he should, by hellish human circumvention, be brought to distrust, and dread, and abjure his own perfect love, is most mournful indeed—it is the infirmity of our good nature, wrestling in vain with the strong powers of evil. Moreover, he would, had Desdemona been false, have been the mere victim of fate; whereas, he is now in a manner his own victim. His happy love was heroic tenderness—his injured love is terrible passion—and disordered power engendered within itself to its own destruction, is the height of all tragedy. The character of Othello is perhaps the most greatly drawn, the most heroic of any of Shakespeare's actors, but it is, perhaps, that one also of which his reader last acquires the intelligence. The intellectual and warlike energy of his mind —his tenderness of affection—his loftiness of spirit—his frank generous magnanimity—impetuosity like a thunderbolt, and that dark fierce flood of boiling passion, polluting even his imagination, compose a character entirely original, most difficult to delineate, but perfectly delineated.

Hamlet might seem to be the intellectual offspring of Shakespeare's love. He alone, of all his offspring, has Shakespeare's own intellect. But he has given him a moral nature, that makes his character individual. Princely, gentle, and loving, full of natural gladness, but having a depth of sensibility which is no sooner touched by the harsh events of life than it is jarred, and the mind for ever overcome with melancholy. For intellect and sensibility blended throughout, and commensurate, and both ideally exalted and pure, are not able to pass through the calamity and trial of life; unless they are guarded by some angel from its shock, they perish in it, or undergo a worse change. The play is a singular example of a piece of great length, resting its interest upon the delineation of one character. For Hamlet, his discourses, and the changes of his mind, are all the play. The other persons—

even his father's ghost, are important through him. And in himself, it is the variation of his mind, and not the varying events of his life, that affords the interest. In the representation, his celebrated soliloquy is perhaps the part of the play that is most expected, even by the common audience. His interview with his mother, of which the interest is produced entirely from his mind—for about her we care nothing—is in like manner remarkable by the sympathy it excites in those for whom the most intellectual of Shakespeare's works would scarcely seem to have been written. This play is perhaps superior to any other in existence for unity in the delineation of character.

We have yet to speak of the most pathetic of the plays of Shakespeare—*Lear*. A story unnatural and irrational in its foundation, but, at the same time, a natural favourite of tradition, has become in the hands of Shakespeare a tragedy of surpassing grandeur and interest. He has seized upon that germ of interest which has already made the story a favourite of popular tradition, and unfolded it into a work for the passionate sympathy of all—young, old, rich, and poor, learned and illiterate, virtuous and depraved. The majestic form of the kingly-hearted old man—the reverend head of the broken-hearted father—"a head so old and white as this"—the royalty from which he is deposed, but of which he can never be divested—the father's heart which, rejected and trampled on by two children, and trampling on its one most young and duteous child, is, in the utmost degree, a father's still—the two characters, father and king, so high to our imagination and love, blended in the reverend image of Lear—*both* in their destitution, yet *both* in their height of greatness—the spirit blighted and yet undepressed—the wits gone, and yet the moral wisdom of a good heart left unstained, almost unobscured—the wild raging of the elements, joined with human outrage and violence to persecute the helpless, unresisting, almost unoffending sufferer; and he himself in the midst of all imaginable misery and desolation, descanting upon himself, on the whirlwinds that drive around him—and then turning in tenderness to some of the wild motley association of sufferers among whom he stands;—all this is not like what has been seen on any stage, perhaps in any reality, but it has made a

world to our imagination about one single imaginary individual, such as draws the reverence and sympathy which should seem to belong properly only to living men. It is like the remembrance of some wild perturbed scene of real life. Everything is perfectly woeful in this world of woe. The very assumed madness of Edgar, which, if the story of Edgar stood alone, would be insufferable, and would utterly degrade him to us, seems, associated as he is with Lear, to come within the consecration of Lear's madness. It agrees with all that is brought together; the night—the storms—the houselessness—Glo'ster with his eyes put out—the fool—the semblance of a madman, and Lear in his madness, are all bound together by a strange kind of sympathy, confusion in the elements of nature, of human society and the human soul. Throughout all the play, is there not sublimity felt amidst the continual presence of all kinds of disorder and confusion in the natural and moral world; a continual consciousness of eternal order, law, and good? This it is that so exalts it in our eyes. There is more justness of intellect in Lear's madness than in his right senses—as if the indestructible divinity of the spirit gleamed at times more brightly through the ruins of its earthly tabernacle. The death of Cordelia and the death of Lear[1] leave on our minds, at least, neither pain nor disappointment, like a common play ending ill—but, like all the rest, they show us human life involved in darkness and conflicting with wild powers let loose to rage in the world; a life which continually seeks peace, and which can only find its good in peace—tending ever to the depth of peace, but of which the peace is not here. The feeling of the play, to those who rightly consider it, is high and calm,—because we are made to know, from and through those very passions which seem there convulsed, and that very structure of life and happiness that seems there crushed,—even in the law of those passions and that life, this eternal Truth, that evil must not be, and that good must be. The only thing intolerable was, that Lear should, by the very truth of his daughter's love, be separated from her love: and his restoration to her love, and therewith to his own perfect

[1] For some admirable observations on this subject, see the Essays of Charles Lamb—a writer to whose generous and benign philosophy, English dramatic literature is greatly indebted.

mind, consummates all that was essentially to be desired—a consummation, after which the rage and horror of mere matter-disturbing death, seems vain and idle. In fact, Lear's killing the slave who was hanging Cordelia—bearing her in dead in his arms—and his heart bursting over her—are no more than the full consummation of their reunited love—and there father and daughter lie in final and imperturbable peace. Cordelia, whom we at last see lying dead before us, and over whom we shed such floods of loving and approving tears, scarcely speaks or acts in the play at all—she appears but at the beginning and the end—is absent from all the impressive and memorable scenes; and to what she does say, there is not much effect given;—yet, by some divine power of conception in Shakespeare's soul, she always seems to our memory one of the principal characters—and while we read the play, she is continually present to our imagination. In her sister's ingratitude, her filial love is felt—in the hopelessness of the broken-hearted king, we are turned to that perfect hope that is reserved for him in her loving bosom—in the midst of darkness, confusion, and misery, her form is like a hovering angel, seen casting its radiance on the storm.

Turning from such noble creations as these, it is natural to ask ourselves, is the age of dramatic literature gone by, never to be restored? Certainly the whole history of our stage, from the extinction of that first great dynasty, down to this very day, shows rather a strong dramatic disposition, than a strong dramatic power; and the names of Rowe, Otway, Lee, and Lillo, are perhaps as far above the most favoured of this age, as they are beneath all those of the age of Elizabeth. It is not to be denied that the whole mind of the country is lowered since those magnificent times; and that its intellectual character has become more external. With respect to the drama, the state of society was then more favourable to it, passing from the strong and turbulent life of early times, yet having much of their native vigour, and much of their pristine shape and growth. The reality of life is seldom shown to our eyes; and each now sees, as it were, but a small part of the whole. He sees a little of one class. The dark study of the constitution of our life is no longer to our taste, nor within the measure of our capacity; and therein lie the causes of their

hopelessness who believe that the tragic drama is no more. Some have thought that the vast number of standard plays is the cause why new plays are not produced. But genius does not work on a consideration of the supply in the market, of the stock on hand. In whatever way it has power to bring itself into sympathy with the heart of the people, so as to dwell in their love and delight, it will go to its work in obedience to such impulses; and surely there is always change enough from one generation to another to make a new field for dramatic composition, or for any kind of literature, so as to enable a mind of power to write more entirely to the passions of his contemporaries, than any one living before him has done.

It seems to us that the poetry of our days has not dealt enough with life and reality. They surely contain elements of poetry, if we had poets who were capable of bringing to use the more difficult materials of their art. Some critics have conceived that the matter of poetry might become exhausted; but the opinion is not likely to gain much credit amongst us. The bolder opinion, that all conditions of human life, for ever, will contain the inexhaustible matter of that art, seems more suitable to our genius. There has been a decided tendency in our own days to prove the capacity of some apparently unfavourable states of life. But it may be questioned whether the experiment has yet found eminent success. What is wanting to poetry in ages like ours, seems to be rather the proper composition of the minds of poets, than a sufficiency of matter in the life from which they would have to paint. The minds of civilised men are too much unpoetical, because the natural play of sensitive imagination in their minds is, in early years, suppressed. They are cultivated with poetry indeed, but that is an unproductive cultivation. Every mind has, by nature, its own springs of poetry. And it may be conceived, that if nature were suffered to have a freer development in our minds, we should grow up, looking upon our own life with that kind of deep emotion with which, in earlier ages, men look upon the face of society; with something like a continuance of those strange and strong feelings with which, as children, we gazed upon the life even of our own generation. We begin in imagination; but we outgrow it. We pass into a state which is not of wisdom, but one in which imagination and

natural passion are suppressed and extinct, and a sort of worldly temper and tone of mind, a substitute for wisdom, is adopted—like it, only in its immunity from youthful illusions. But wisdom retains the generosity of youth without its dreams, whereas this worldly wit of ours parts with youth and generosity together; and yet, while it dispels those pardonable dreams, does not exempt us from deceptions of its own, and from passions which have the ardour, but not the beauty of youth.

What Poet of the present day is there, who, grasping resolutely with the reality of life, such as our own age brings it forth, has produced true, simple, and powerful poetry? Two have made approaches to this kind, Cowper and Wordsworth. But the poetry of Cowper wants power. And though Wordsworth has expressly applied himself to this part of poetry, yet the strongest passion of his own mind is the passion for nature; and his most powerful poetry may be called almost contemplative. He is the poet of meditation. His sympathy with passions is very imperfect. And the poetry which he has drawn from present life, which, assuredly, he has much contemplated and studied, is more of a touching gentleness than of power. It is, moreover, human life blended, and almost lost in nature. It is nowhere the strength of life brought out to be the very being of poetry. Of those of our poetical writers, who, with some power indeed of glowing imagination, have wrought pictures of other scenes of the world, we hold it not necessary to speak. They have escaped from reality. Burns appears to us the only one who, looking steadfastly upon the life to which he was born, has depictured it, and changed it into poetry.

This appears to us the true test of the mind which is born to poetry, and is faithful to its destination. It is not born to live in antecedent worlds, but in its own; in its own world, by its own power, to discover poetry; to discover, that is, to recognise and distinguish the materials of life which belong to imagination.

Imagination discovering materials of its own action in the life present around it, ennobles that life, and connects itself with the on-goings of the world; but escaping from that life, it seems to us to fly from its duty, and to desert its place of service.

The poetry which would be produced by imagination, conversing intimately with human life, would be that of tragedy. But we have no tragic poet. Schiller is, perhaps, the only great tragic poet who has lived in the same day with ourselves. And wild and portentous as his shapes of life often are, who is there that does not feel that the strange power by which they hold us is derived from the very motions of our blood, and that the breath by which we live breathes in them? He has thrown back his scenes into other times of the world: but we find *ourselves* there. It is from real, present life, that he has borrowed that terrible spell of passion by which he shakes so inwardly the very seat of feeling and thought. The tragic poets of England, in the age of our dramatic literature, have shown the same power; and they drew it from the same source; from imagination submitted to human life, and dwelling in the midst of it.

The whole character of our life and literature seems to us to show in our cultivated classes a disposition of imagination to separate itself from real life, and to go over into works of art. It may appear to some a matter of little consequence; and perhaps they will think that it is *then* beginning to confine itself to its right province. We think there are many who will not be so easily satisfied; and to whom it will appear that such a separation, if it be indeed taking place, cannot be effected without grievous injury to the character of our minds. We think it possible that the great overflow of poetry in this age may be in part from this cause. And there seems to us already a great disappearance of imagination from the character of all our passions.

But life is still strong. And wherever men are assembled in societies, and are not swallowed up in sloth or most debasing passion, there the great elements of our nature are in action: and much as in this day, to look upon the face of life, it appears to be removed from all poetry, we cannot but believe that, in the very heart of our most civilised life—in our cities—in each great metropolis of commerce—in the midst of the most active concentration of all those relations of being which seem most at war with imagination—there the materials which imagination seeks in human life are yet to be found.

It were much to be wished, therefore, for the sake both of

our literature and of our life, that imagination would again be content to dwell with life—that we had less of poetry, and that of more strength; and that imagination were again to be found as it used to be, one of the elements of life itself; a strong principle of our nature living in the midst of our affections and passions, blending with, kindling, invigorating, and exalting them all. Then might the spirit of dramatic literature be revived.

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